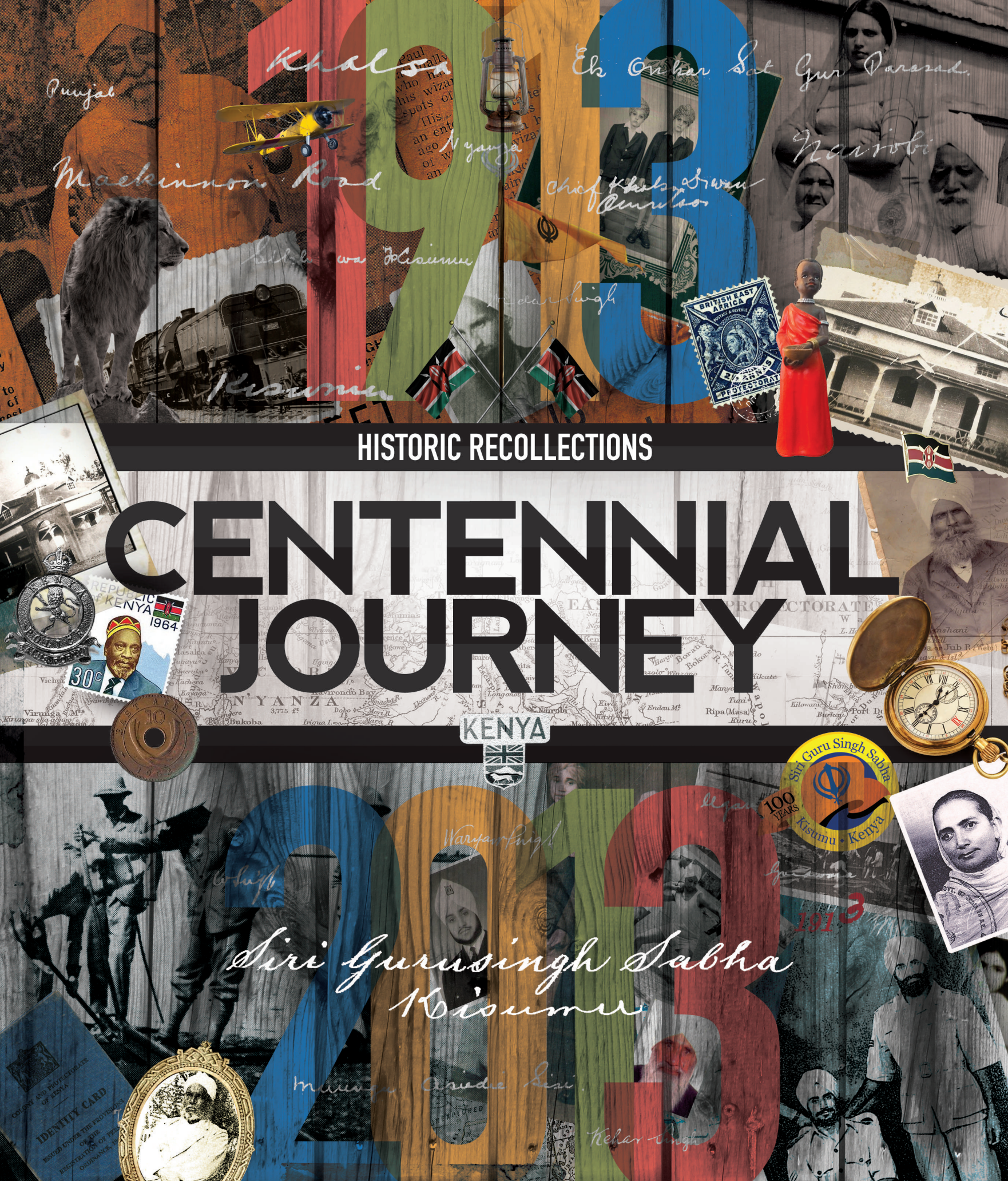
HISTORIC RECOLLECTIONS
CENTENNIAL JOURNEY
KENYA
Siri Guru Singh Sabha
100 YEARS
Kisumu • Kenya
Siri Gurusingh Sabha
Kisumu

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1913

HISTORIC RECOLLECTIONS

CENTENNIAL JOURNEY

2013

Siri Gurusingh Sabha
Kisumu

IN MEMORY OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF
SIRI GURU SINGH SABHA, KISUMU (KENYA)

॥ ਸੰਤਾ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਜਿ ਆਪਿ ਖਲੋਇਆ
ਹਰਿ ਕੰਮੁ ਕਰਾਵਣਿ ਆਇਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

The Lord Himself has stood up to resolve the affairs of
the Saints; He has come to complete their tasks.

॥ ਧਰਤਿ ਸੁਹਾਵੀ ਤਾਲੁ ਸੁਹਾਵਾ ਵਿਚਿ
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਜਲੁ ਛਾਇਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

The land is beautiful, and the pool is beautiful; within
it is contained the Ambrosial Water.

GURU ARJAN DEV JI
SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB, ANG 783

The blue in our commemorativ emblem is a soothing colour of spirituality, sincerity and inspiration that allows us to look beyond, and increase our outward prospective. It also contains a cool vibration that is helpful to communication. The colour yellow symbolizes joy, happiness, wisdom and creativity. Yellow light clears the mind, making it active and alert, as the colour is full of intellectual energy and is a symbol of unrequited love. The colour orange imparts sense of establishment.

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HIS EXCELLENCY

Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta

C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF
OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA

KENYA NATIONAL ANTHEM

Ee Mungu nguvu yetu
Ilete baraka kwetu
Haki iwe ngao na mlinzi
Natukae na Undugu
Amani na uhuru
Raha tupate na ustawi

O God of all creation
Bless this our land and nation
Justice be our shield and defender
May we dwell in unity
Peace and liberty
Plenty be found within our borders

Amkeni ndugu zetu
Tufanye sote bidii
Nasi tujitoe kwa nguvu
Nchi yetu ya Kenya
Tunayoipenda
Tuwe tayari kuilinda

Let one and all arise
With hearts both strong and true
Service be our earnest endeavour
And our homeland of Kenya
Heritage of splendour
Firm may we stand to defend

Natujenge taifa letu
Ee, ndio wajibu wetu
Kenya istahili heshima
Tuungane mikono
Pamoja kazini
Kila siku tuwe na shukrani

Let all with one accord
In common bond united
Build this our nation together
And the glory of Kenya
The fruit of our labour
Fill every heart with thanksgiving

HONOURABLE

Raila Odinga

FIRST PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA

ASANTE SANA!

The Kalasinghas of Kenya owe their heartfelt gratitude to the peoples of Kenya with whom our pioneer community worked hand-in-hand in helping build a country we pride to call home. Tuko Pamoja!

MOOL MANTAR

ੴ

One Universal Creator God

ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ

The Name Is Truth

ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ

Creative Being Personified

ਨਿਰਭਉ

No Fear

ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ

No Hatred

ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ

Image Of The Undying

ਅਜੂਨੀ

Beyond Birth

ਸੈਭੰ

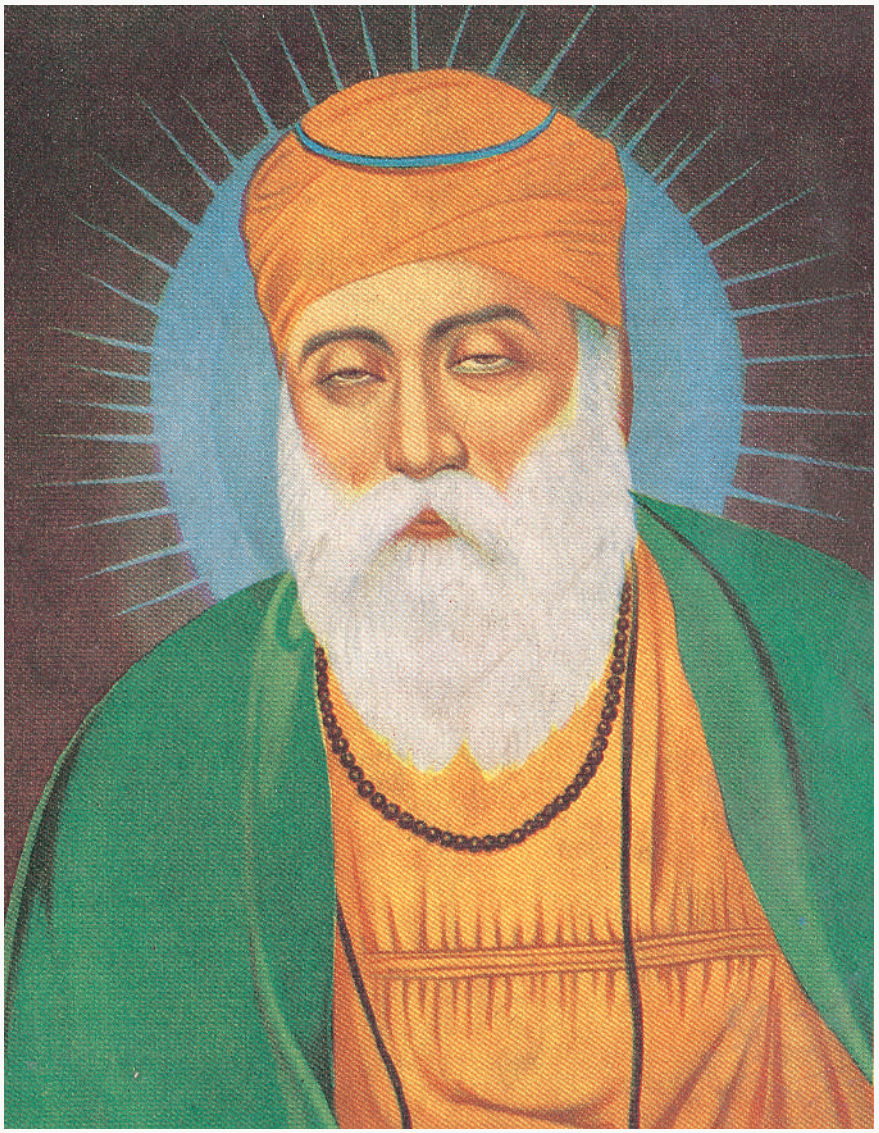
Self-Existent

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ

By Guru's Grace

The Mool Mantar is the most important composition contained within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib - the Living Guru (WORD) of the Sikhs and is composed by Guru Nanak Dev Ji

Rare painting of Guru Nanak Dev Ji that has been in the Gurudwara since its pioneering days



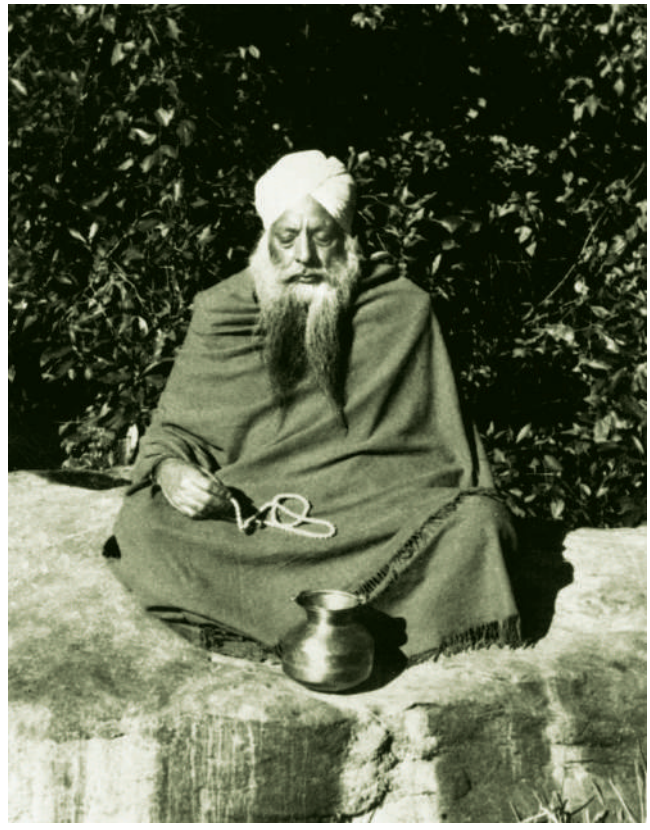
Guru Nanak Dev Ji

1469 ~ 1539

The founding Guru of the Sikh faith upon whose teachings inspire the Sikhs to work an honest living, share with the needy and meditate on the Creator Lord. It is these basic principles that they have managed to make a home in every part of the world.

OUR INSPIRATION

AFRICA'S FIRST SIKH SAINT



Sant Baba Puran Singh Ji

Kericho, Kenya

The word Sant in Punjabi is akin to ‘saint’ and denotes a spiritually elevated human being. Such people serve as beacons to kindle spiritual flames in the hearts of those who come into Sangat (religious congregation) with them, through their divine knowledge, humility, magnanimity and compassion.

The Sikh Faith places importance on true sangat for an individual to progress on his personal spiritual path. Keeping the sangat of true saints is an opportunity to receive guidance and blessings from those who, through every aspect of their lives, have walked the Guru’s path and reached an exceptional stage of enlightenment.

Sant Baba Puran Singh Ji of Kericho stands as one of the most eminent and influential Sikh saints of the twentieth century. Born in Punjab, he migrated to Kenya in 1916, where he soon set up ‘Kericho Wagon Works’ in the small town of Kericho, and focused on earning a living, being a father to his family and helping others in the town, notably through municipal improvement schemes, such as the renovation of hospitals, schools and churches. His civic contributions were officially recognized by naming the Town square as Sant Puran Singh Square. In 1952, his spirituality was given open recognition by a visiting saint, Sant Baba Mani Singh Ji, from India. Thereafter, his immense compassion and connection to God drew thousands to Kericho to seek inspiration into Sikhi (Sikh way of life). Baba Ji moved to England in 1970 where he continued to inspire and enjoin Sikhs to Sikhi, and setting the base for Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha to continue in his exemplary service to humanity.

One of the original wagons made at Baba Ji’s ‘Kericho Wagon Works’

{ A Profound Gratitude }

Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Ji

CHAIRMAN
Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha

On behalf of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, it is a pleasure, honour and privilege to write this celebratory message on the historic, 100th anniversary of the founding of Gurudwara Singh Sabha, Kisumu.

Pioneer farmer Bhai Bukan Singh at his Kibos farm

May we offer our heartfelt congratulations to the respected management, to the Guru's sangat and, indeed, to all residents of Kisumu. It was in 1901 that the laying of the permanent track of the Ugandan Railway reached Kisumu, from the port of Mombasa. Following the railway surveyor's successful completion of the line, it seems no coincidence to me that the first name given to Kisumu - Port Florence – affectionately echoed his wife's name.

In the early days, however, Kisumu was a mosquito-infested town where the railway terminated. With work on the railway completed, many Sikhs were uncertain whether to return to India. The British encouraged them to settle in Kibos, where they began growing sugar cane. These first Sikh pioneers would have come to British Kenya around 1898, only some fifteen years previous to the start of the Gurudwara Sahib's construction in Kisumu, which took place just before the start of the First World War. As early settlers, they would have faced many challenges as they struggled to establish themselves. Undoubtedly for these early Sikhs, the Gurudwara Sahib's founding must have served their collective hopes and aspirations and helped them to draw comfort and support, optimism and resilience from their Guru in times of uncertainty and challenge.

Let us express our profound gratitude to Waheguru Almighty and to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji for providing one hundred years of guiding light to past and present managements, sewadars and the sangat, who all this time have served selflessly with commitment, hard work and devotion to duty.

Kenya's Sikhs must congratulate both themselves and indigenous Kenyans, the inhabitants of the host country, who have jointly contributed to the prosperity of the Kenya that we enjoy today.

The Gurudwara's foundation stone was laid on 21st December 1913 by Srimaan Panthrattan Sardar Attar Singh, a Permanent Way inspector of the Ugandan Railway, in the presence of nearly all the Sikh residents of the Nyanza province and the leading members of the other communities of Kisumu. On 30th July 1914 the building plot, comprising of the Gurudwara and 12 out-houses, was secured from the Government on leasehold originally for 99 years in the name of the Chief Khalsa Dewan of the Punjab, India (at this point in time, the Sikh Gurudwaras Act was not yet in existence). The building was envisaged to be completed by Vaisakhi 1914, however, the start of the first World War would have affected its progress and

CHIEF KHALSA DIWAN

The Chief Khalsa Diwan was founded in 1902. It is a Central Sikh Organisation of various Singh Sabhas spread all over Punjab with the 'mission' to promote the aspirations and redress grievances of the Sikh public, settle their religious differences and channelise Sikh public opinion. Its primary aim was to promote the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, educational and economic welfare of the Sikhs as well as to safe - guard the political rights by making the Government aware of the problems, needs and grievances of the Sikh community.

in May 1915 the work was still nearing completion and appeals were made for further funds. The Chief Khalsa Dewan had also been requested to provide a Granthi who would be able to teach the Kisumu community Panjabi. (It may be of interest to note that it was not long after this, in 1916/17, that Baba Puran Singh Ji arrived in Kenya still in his teenage years, and set up his permanent residence and business the 'Kericho Wagon Works' in Kericho in 1925, the legacy of his sewa to the East African and global Sikh sangat still waiting to unfold).

The relatively short history of the 100 years of Sikhs in Kisumu has been a dynamic one, for Sikhs are hard-working, God-fearing and God-loving people who make an impact on each and every region in which they settle. In Kenya, they have tilled the land as farmers, ventured into businesses, served the country as contractors, professionals and civil servants.

As Sikhs, our historic migration from one continent to another reminds us of the Guru's message, that each of us arrive on this planet as vanjaaray or traders, on a quest to generate divine wealth. This is a metaphor for the accumulation of spiritual attributes such as compassion, mercy, courage, selflessness and love. Once our journey is done, they are the only imperishable souvenirs or kamai ('earnings') we are able to carry forward with us, as the fruits of the life we have lived.

May we invoke Satguru's blessings for the many pioneers who are no longer with us. Their spirit and the fruit of their dedicated service at the Guru's 'dwaar' lives on. In doing so, may we cast our minds back to the host of local and global events taking place around the time of the Gurudwara's founding. Seeing this bigger picture compels us to treasure ever more dearly the rich legacy of values gifted to us by our Gurus. They have uplifted us as Sikhs wherever we have settled in the world and have transformed life around us, keeping alive the dual spirit of chardi kala and sarbat da bhalla – consistent optimism and concern for the welfare of all.

From humble beginnings until the present day, the Gurudwara owes its existence to the vision and determination of the founding fathers. As foreign settlers in a foreign land they stood firm in their religious beliefs and sought to cement their bond with the people of their newly adopted country. It is our knowledge of the past century which affects our present existence and our future anticipated dreams. Let us recall that history and recognise how remarkable it has been. The celebration of this milestone of one century provides a golden opportunity for us to recognise the riches and strengths of the Sikh dharam for bettering ourselves and bringing good to the world around us in the spirit of serving all of God's creation which so deeply characterises our faith. We must extract all the positives from the past and take them in hand to build new futures as the world changes. We must ask ourselves what seeds we can sow now, that may be celebrated in another century to come.

Our dharam provides an ethos, vision, values, teachings, personal and shared practices to assist us. It is based on the continuous interlinking of three activities in our day-to-day life - to 'pray, work, share' - 'naam japo, kirat karo, vand ke chhako'. Our simran and sewa must be of equal magnitude, the prayer helping us to become wise through contemplation and the service helping us to maintain humility and neutralise arrogance. Spending time in sadh sangat, spiritually enlightened company, kindles and accelerates our spiritual growth. With the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, this helps us to navigate through the pitfalls and opportunities of life and nurture the best values inside us. In Sikh life globally, it is the Gurudwara which provides a 'hub' to remind us and invigorate us

with these teachings and practices. As the 'gateway to the Guru' it brings us to the 'lifeline' to our faith, our 'living' and 'eternal' shabad-Guru.

From our tenth Guru, following the Khalsa's creation, came the instruction to remain 'distinct' in our faith practice and identity. At the same time, Guru Gobind Singh Ji emphatically promoted universal solidarity and global cohesion by commanding us to 'recognise the whole human race as one family' beyond perceived boundaries of caste, vocation and ethnicity. The first historic Panj Piyaare initiated into the Khalsa order epitomised this, being drawn from different occupations and corners of India. Additionally, Guru Ji informed us 'sach kaho sun leho sabhai, jin prem kiyo tin hee prabh paiyo' – it is only by genuinely loving God and His entire creation that we may meet up with Him. This involves respecting the God-given diversity of different creeds and cultures. The lion-heartedness required for this in times of oppression was demonstrated by the ninth Guru's unwavering stand to uphold religious freedom and resist forceful religious conversion – by laying down his life for this principle. Each of our Gurus sought t o mobilise and engage people across all faiths to recognise and practice shared spiritual values.

Dharam is associated with 'righteous conduct', as opposed to exercising exploitation and deceit. In a hymn which has become a Sikh 'anthem', Guru Gobind Singh stresses that dharam is the practice, not of deeds for the sake of ritual, but of 'shubh karam' – those driven by human goodness and Godly values. An English interpretation of the anthem can read: 'Empower me, God, to never shy away from doing what is good and right; May I thus become fearless in facing life's battles inside and around me, with resolute belief in victory; May my mind then learn, yearning only to praise Your infinite goodness; And so, may I relentlessly continue to do all that is good and right, until my very last breath.'

Above all, the legacy we share as Sikhs, and which we should endeavour to embody and demonstrate to our fellow human beings in the world, is one of human empowerment through spiritual values, as represented in the Sikh identity which we hold dear – the panj kakkar and the khanda emblem which graces the 'beacon' of refuge and support - the Nishan Sahib, in every Gurudwara

Guru Gobind Singh Ji - the last human Guru of the Sikhs

worldwide. Our past is our collective memory of the local Kenyans and the Sikhs who became fondly known as the Kala Singhas. The preservation of this historic Gurudwara will keep alive our religious and cultural heritage for many decades to come in this corner of the world and beyond. Heritage conservation for us Sikhs involves more than protecting bricks and mortar; it involves the conservation of rich age-old values, traditions, virtues and human integrity. In a world scenario where greed, exploitation, misunderstanding, mistrust, enmity, poverty and fear still loom large, the Sikh dharam shines a light on those qualities which are essential to the flourishing of all human beings, enabling us to live and collectively prosper 'in God's image'.

In order to forge a path forward into this 21st century, the Gurudwara is our heritage, our pride, our beacon of admiration and praise, and the jewel we each share to illuminate our lives with for the better. Long may we cherish this treasure of the Gurudwara in Kisumu for all the years to come. May we ever remember that wherever resides our Satguru, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, blessed becomes that place and blessed become those who lovingly serve in its precincts.

FOREWORD

Sardar Charanjit Singh Hayer

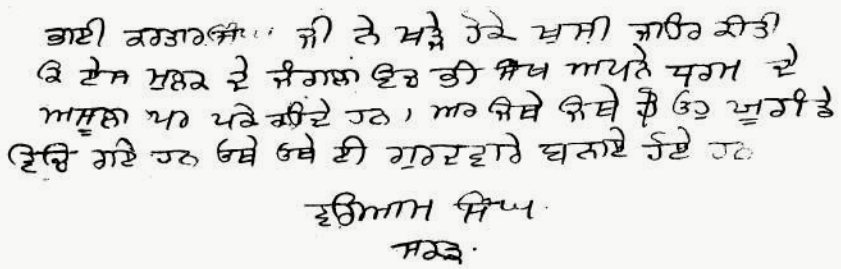
CHAIRMAN
Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu

WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA, WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH

It is with the grace of Waheguru Ji that Nyanza Sikhs are celebrating the centenary of laying the foundation stone of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. This momentous occasion has offered a unique opportunity for the Sabhas' Sewadars (volunteers) to produce this book, dedicated to REMEMBERING our forefathers and past Sangat (community); SHARING their endeavours and efforts; RECOGNISING the on-going commitment, dedication and contribution of the Sangat; RECORDING the Nyanza Sikh community's progression; INSPIRING today's generations and PRESERVING for tomorrow.

Our forefathers, amongst other Asian immigrants, first landed in British East Africa – what is today Kenya in the late 19th century to construct the Uganda Railway line. They were a skilled, entrepreneurial and hardworking workforce. On the completion of the railway, many of the workers remained in Kenya, seeking new opportunities. The headcount of the Nyanza Sikhs at the start of the 20th century was approximately 80 people.

The book of minutes dated 19th November, 1910 – 1916 for Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu records all that was discussed to build the New Gurudwara. It is a fascinating read into the past of a pioneer community in their new homeland. The Gurudwara's story started in 1910. Having read the century-old minutes and correspondence of Didar Singh, Waryam Singh & Nihal Singh (the Sabha's first President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively), one is moved with over-whelming admiration for their endeavours as they resolved to build a Gurudwara to cater for the social and spiritual needs of the community. It was an arduous challenge for the small community who were starting life in a new continent as entrepreneurs, in new jobs or working for the railway; and money was a shortcoming. However, this lot of hardworking Indians would cement their roots in this lake shore town by laying the foundation stone of the New Gurudwara on 21st December, 1913.



Waryam Singh, Secretary of Siri Gurudwara Singh Sabha Kisumu, wrote, 'Bhai Kartar Singh stood up and expressed his joy that in the jungles of this land, the Sikhs have remained steadfast in their Dharam and wherever they travered through to Uganda (with the building of the Railway from Mombasa, they built their Gurudwaras along the way.'

Our forefathers came with great core values, such as hard work, discipline, importance of family, community and one's faith and various skills, which set a solid foundation paving the way for our community to build upon and prosper in future. In particular, our forefathers were instilled with the invaluable treasure of their faith ''DHARAM" whereby they established their places of religious worship which brought communities close together. This has been reaffirmed in a heart-warming note I came across, dated 27th December 1912, by Waryam Singh (and included in old records of minutes dated 19th November 1910 -1916.) Today, Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu is one of the earliest established Sikh institutions in Kenya and holds an imposing and dignified place in the heart of Kisumu town. It is a recognised land mark that attracts the attention of locals and tourists alike. For the Nyanza Sikhs, the Gurudwara is a much loved and treasured, sacred home, where the Sangat meet regularly for prayer, langar sewa and social gathering. It is also a source of divine and spiritual enlightenment for the community. The Gurudwara has been visited by many revered Saints and important dignitaries over the years.

On the occasion of this centenary, we must not forget that the first Indian settlers were individuals without their families and occupied themselves by getting together regardless of their faith or which part of India they came from. Even in the challenging environment, they comforted and supported one another. They progressed this way and made a success of their lives in their new found homeland. It was the zeal of our forefathers, and their community's spirit, which led to the Gurudwara, the first place of worship in Kisumu, to be built. Contributions for the Gurudwara's initial construction came from both Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. Through their hard-work, our forefathers were able to bring their families from India and educate their children. They set up businesses which grew into very successful entreprises. Remembering our past, learning from our mistakes and looking progressively into the future is what the 100 years celebration is about. We have now become an integral part of the Kenyan nation, which is celebrating 50 years of its independence. We are part of this celebration and join hands with the rest of our Kenyan 'brothers' to eradicate poverty and be united as a nation. Hopefully, this book will capture something of eras gone by and Sabha's contribution, which includes progress of its institutions; Singh Sabha Schools, Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary and Simba Club, in the service of education, medicine, sport and culture. We deeply appreciate all those who have supported the making of this book, including the Sewadars, as this is not a one-person job. Our gratitude extends to all, who during the course of a century have rendered a tireless and dedicated service to this Gurudwara. Some are with us today, while many though not physically present, are with us in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

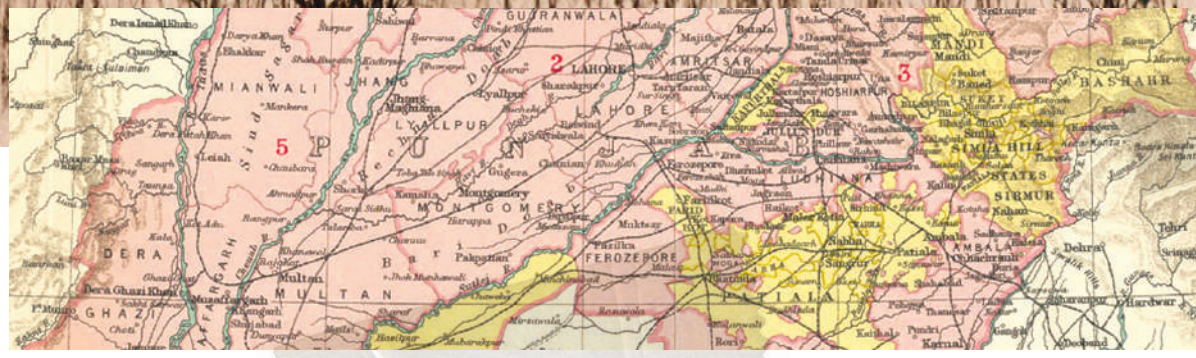
The book of minutes dated 19 November 1910-1916 for Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu records all that was discussed to build the 'New Gurudwara'. It is a fascinating read into the past of a pioneer community in their new homeland. On the last days of the 19th century, the Sikhs set foot on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kisumu, Africa's largest lake. On Saturday 20th December 1901 at 4p.m, Florence Preston, the wife of the Chief Engineer drove a nail of rail 50 feet above the lake waters, and the trading post of the local Luo people, "Kisumo" became Port Florence-but only for a year before it reverted to its original name, Kisumu.

*The last peg on the line was driven in on 20 December 1901, by **Florence Preston**, wife of Ronald Preston - the chief platelayer of the railway at Kisumu. The city was previously known as Port Florence in her honour.*

Twelve years later, on 21st December 1913, the Nyanza Sikhs in Kisumu gathered early morning for an important function-one that would cement their roots in the lakeshore town. It was to lay the foundation stone of the 'New Gurudwara'.

PHOTO COURTESY AND COPYRIGHT OF KENYA NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KENYA

One of the earliest impression of Sikhs when they arrived in Kisumu, a very rare photo, probably never before published.



Lake at Port Florence. The Sikhs who settled in Nyanza in the early 1900s nurtured their dreams in this new land - the British East Africa Protectorate - and worked their way into earning their rightful place in an emerging new country that later came to be known as Kenya.

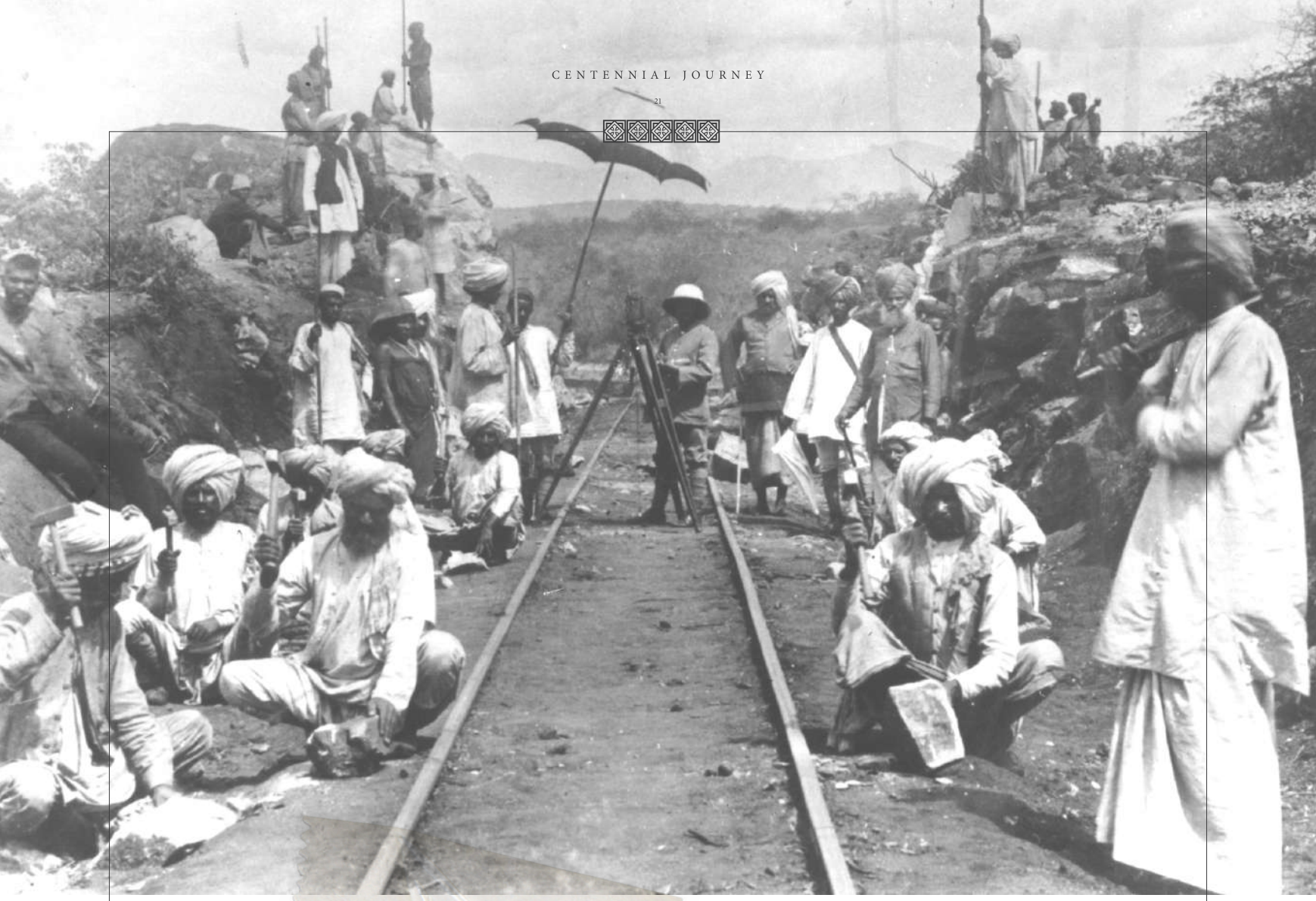


PHOTO FROM COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

The group of pioneers included the Sikhs, Hindus, Gujaratis and Muslims from the hardy tribes of the Punjab in India. They had laboured for six years to construct, with little more than their bare hands and rudimentary machinery, a railway terrain then teeming with wild animals and dubbed the 'Dark Continent', because little was known of its interior. When built, the 584-mile railroad called the Uganda Railway became the first modern transport in East Africa to open it up to the outside world.

THE NYANZA SIKHS

PHOTO FROM COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Thousands of skilled and endentured labourers were shipped into British East Africa Protectorate (which later came to be known as Kenya) in 1898 to build the highly ambitious Uganda Railway that sought to outdo the Germans who were planning their own railway system in Tanganyika.

About 31,983 Indians were employed by the British to construct the Uganda Railway. Several hundred Africans and fewer Europeans were also hired.

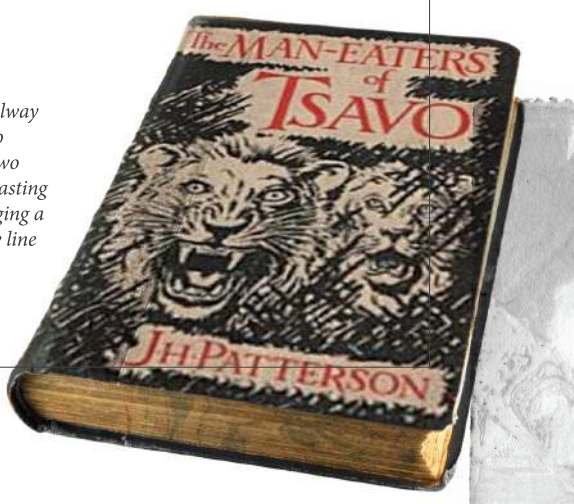
PHOTO FROM COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

The Uganda Railway was simply a means to get from one country to another. Uganda was agriculturally rich and the railway was the most practical mode of transport to move the huge cargo to the coastal town of Mombasa in Kenya from the land-locked protectorate of Uganda. The British had built the infrastructure in India. The sensible thing to do was simply to encourage the skilled Indian workforce to sign up to construct the railway line in the British East Africa. However, this came at a cost.

The Uganda Railway claimed the lives of 2,495 Indian workers. Among them, 28 were devoured by lions, the most infamous being the man-eaters of Tsavo. Ungan Singh was the first victim of the lions. Other victims included the Africans and Europeans but the toll was on the Indians.

When the rail finally reached Kisumu in 1901, a hardy lot of entrepreneurial Indians decided to make the lakeshore port their new home. Some continued to work for the railway department as clerks, mechanics, inspectors and locomotive drivers. As the years rolled on, they entered white-collar jobs such as lawyers, teachers and doctors. An enterprising lot established steelworks, others ventured into farming and timber works while the rest engaged in whatever business opportunities they could find. To label the Indian rail worker as a "coolie" has been debated amongst scholars as a derogative term for a highly skilled labour force. The term 'coolie' refers to an unskilled manual labourer. The Indian rail worker on the Uganda Railway could not have constructed the railway if its only skill was smashing stones as an unskilled labourer.

J H Patterson' recorded his misadventures of building the railway bridge over the treacherous Tsavo River, and hunting down of the two blood-thirsty lions that took to feasting on the railway builders and bringing a halt to the progress of the railway line for up to three months on end.



BOOK FROM A PERSONAL COLLECTION

EARLY KISUMU

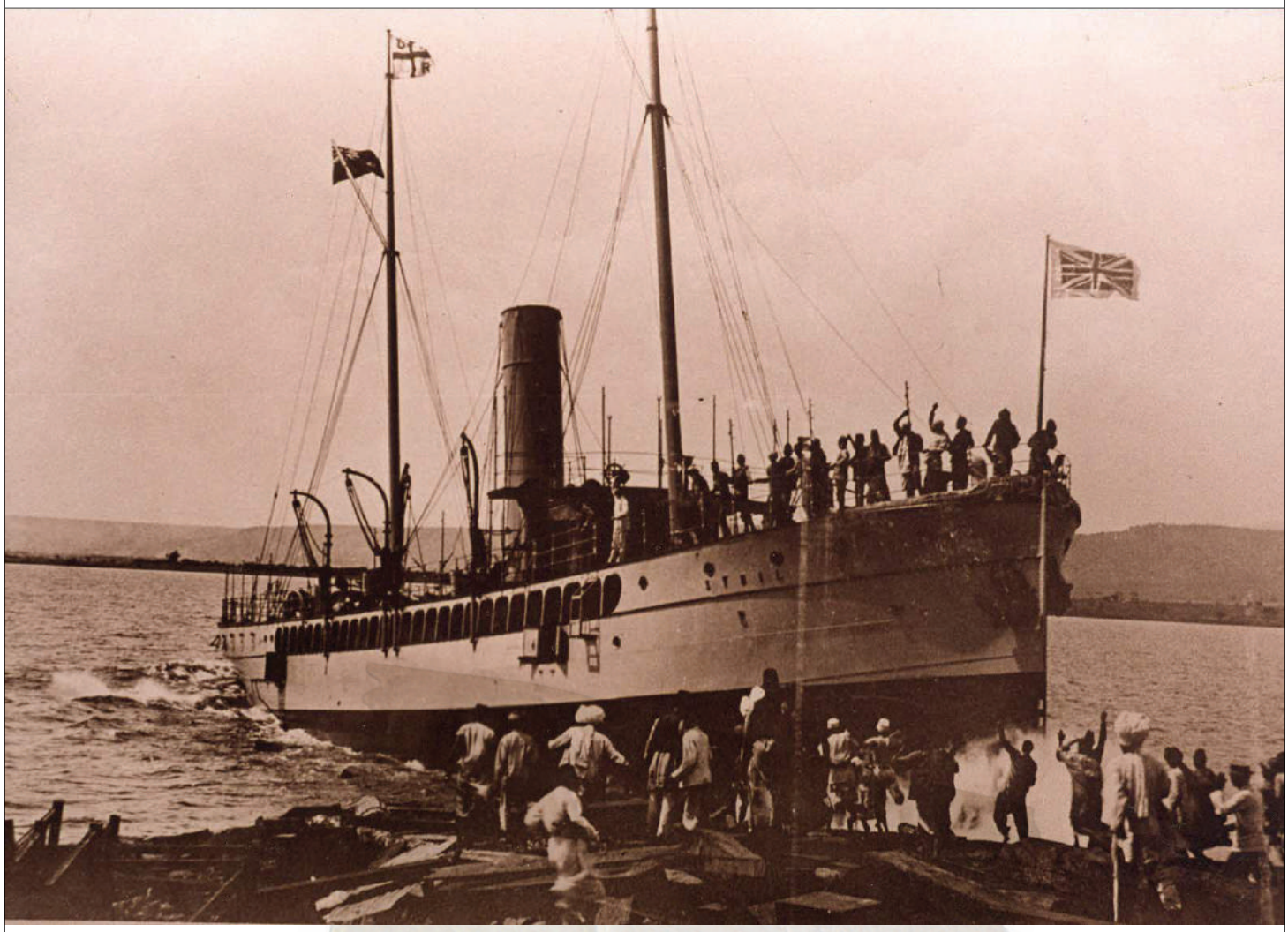


PHOTO FROM PERSONAL COLLECTIONS

By 1900, the British had established Kisumu as the District headquarters with the provincial offices. The same year, a 62–ton ship, William Mackinnon, made its maiden voyage to Entebbe in Uganda, marking the beginning of marine services on the lake.

PHOTO COURTESY AND COPYRIGHT OF KENYA NATIONAL MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Despite the fact that Kisumu was a mosquito-infested area, the enterprising pioneer Sikhs who settled there turned around its fortunes and transformed it into a booming business of sugarcane farms - a scene that was reminiscient of the Punjab

In December 1901, the railway line reached the Kisumu pier. The line was open to goods and passenger traffic. Charles Hobley, a colonial administrator who became the first District Commissioner of Kisumu, who also planned the lakeshore town described it as a rocky area covered with thorn bush, before it was cleared and roads were made. The railway station and other important buildings were built near the water. The Indian Bazaar and the Railway Landhies were on a flat area. Higher up and on a bluff overlooking it all was the European area.

In 1903, the township boundaries were gazetted on the present site. Some 12,000 acres, including water, were set aside for the new town's development as the previous site was found unsuitable as it was too rocky. The climate and the mosquitoes were a challenge.

In 1905, Kisumu was placed in quarantine. Ainsworth the Provincial Commissioner remarked 'Kisumu was not, at this time, a place for a 'melancholy man'.

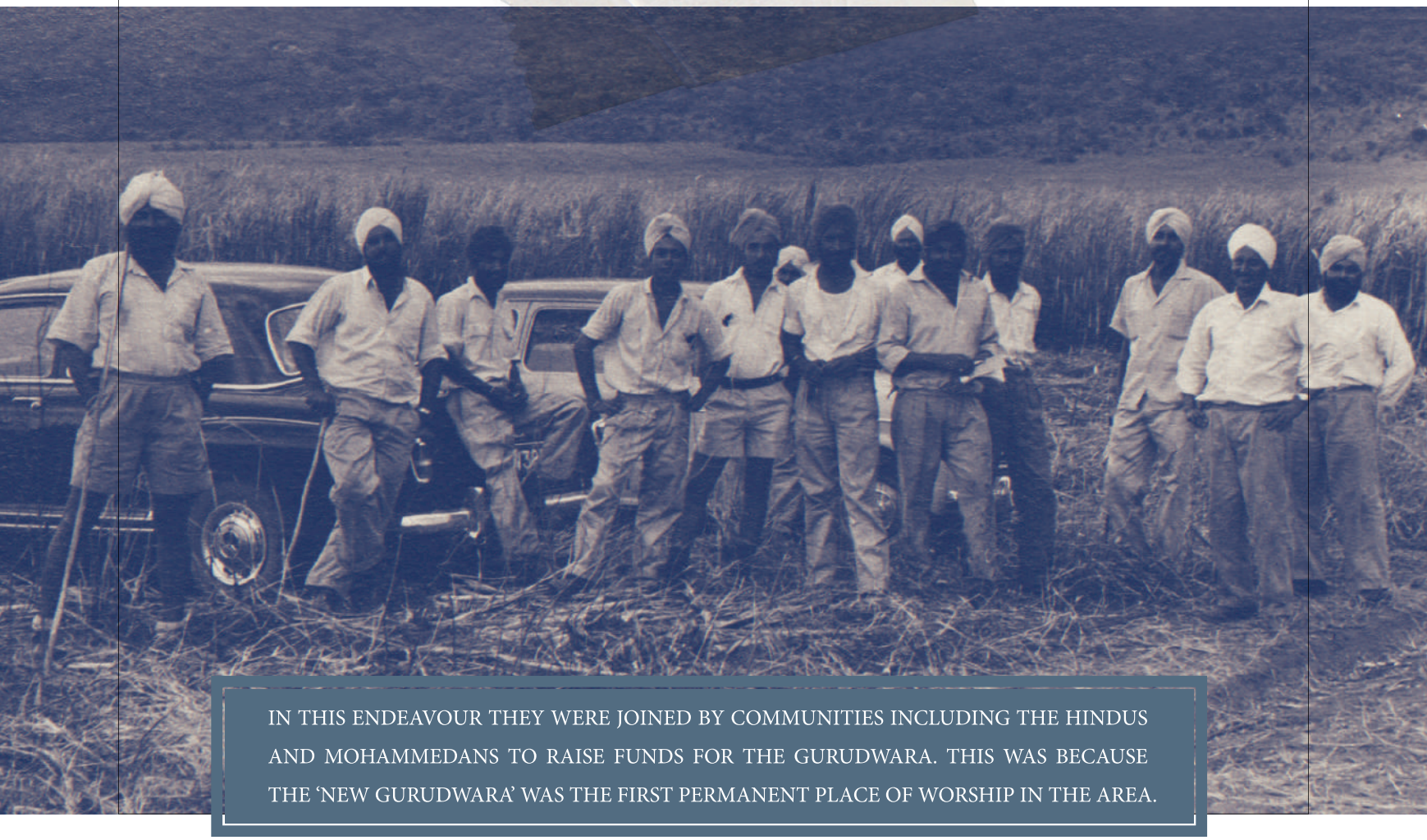
Nearly 500 natives – the Jaluo – were affected by "Trypanosomiasis" (Sleeping sickness caused by Tsetse flies) and plague. The Indians too suffered from the diseases, but where the Europeans could pick and choose, the others had to deal with the situation. Whereas the European Station Master was posted to Maji Mazuri (sweet water), the Indian counterpart had to be content with "Maji Ya Chumvi (brackish water)".

Nevertheless, Kisumu's prominence grew as the terminus of the Railway and the starting point of the Lake steamers to the neighbouring German Tanganyika and the Uganda Protectorate. The harbour was in place with facilities for sea planes to land. The Sikhs and their Indian co-workers worked their way to find employment in the railway and marine departments around the lake in the three countries.

The 1963 souvenir edition of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Nairobi reads, "As the railway pierced its way into the interior, the Sikhs built a temporary Gurudwara at every major camp….."

By1902, the Sikh population in Kisumu stood at approximately 80, with the larger Indian community at 2000. This motley group of Sikhs took no time to establish a Gurudwara in a railway building. However, towards the end of the decade, the building was derelict and marked to be demolished.

PHOTO FROM PERSONAL COLLECTIONS



IN THIS ENDEAVOUR THEY WERE JOINED BY COMMUNITIES INCLUDING THE HINDUS AND MOHAMMEDANS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE GURUDWARA. THIS WAS BECAUSE THE 'NEW GURUDWARA' WAS THE FIRST PERMANENT PLACE OF WORSHIP IN THE AREA.

**Victoria's Tin Dragon - A Railway That Built A Nation - by Satya V. Sood published by Vanguard Press, 2007*

Then someone said: "We must build a proper Gurudwara now." From the minutes' book and correspondence file written at times in Gurmukhi, at times in Urdu and Hindi and at times in English - the story of the 'New Gurudwara' unfolds. The handwritten minutes bring to life the building of this iconic Gurudwara that celebrates a century since the foundation stone was laid. It is a landmark which cemented a solid foundation for future generations of Sikhs in Kenya. In this endeavour they were joined by communities including the Hindus and Mohammedans to raise funds for the Gurudwara. This was because the 'New Gurudwara' was the first permanent place of worship in the area.

One of the earliest photos of Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu

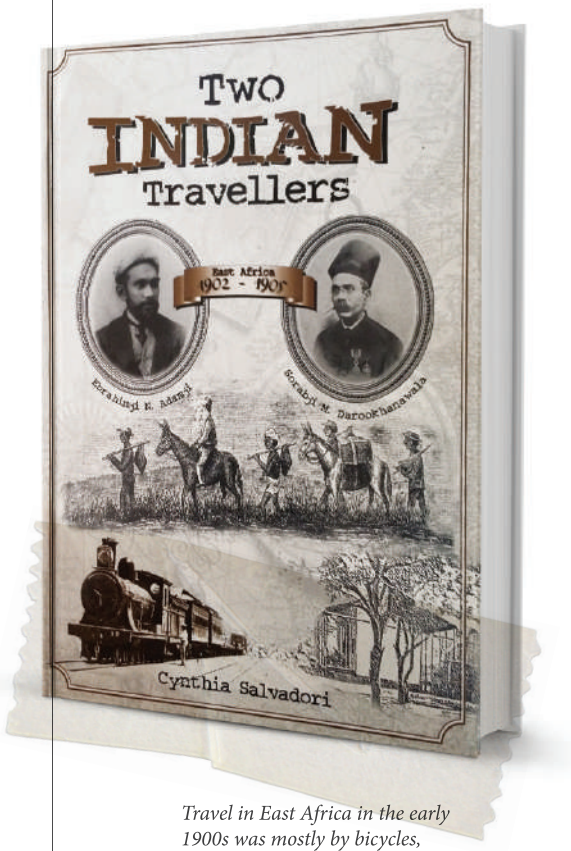
The single-mindedness of the 'Nyanza Sikhs' to construct the Gurudwara is admirable. Within four years the Gurudwara was ready for the opening ceremony dated Baisakhi*, 12th April 1917.

** Baisakhi (also known as Vaisakhi) is harvest season in Punjab, and also a historic event celebrated in April by the Sikh Community to commemorate the establishment of the Khalsa*

THE YALA TRIP

22 FEBRUARY 1913

Journey to Fundraise for the 'New Gurudwara'



Travel in East Africa in the early 1900s was mostly by bicycles, ox-cart and on donkey, as illustrated in Cynthia Salvadori's book 'Two Indian Travellers'.

PHOTO FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

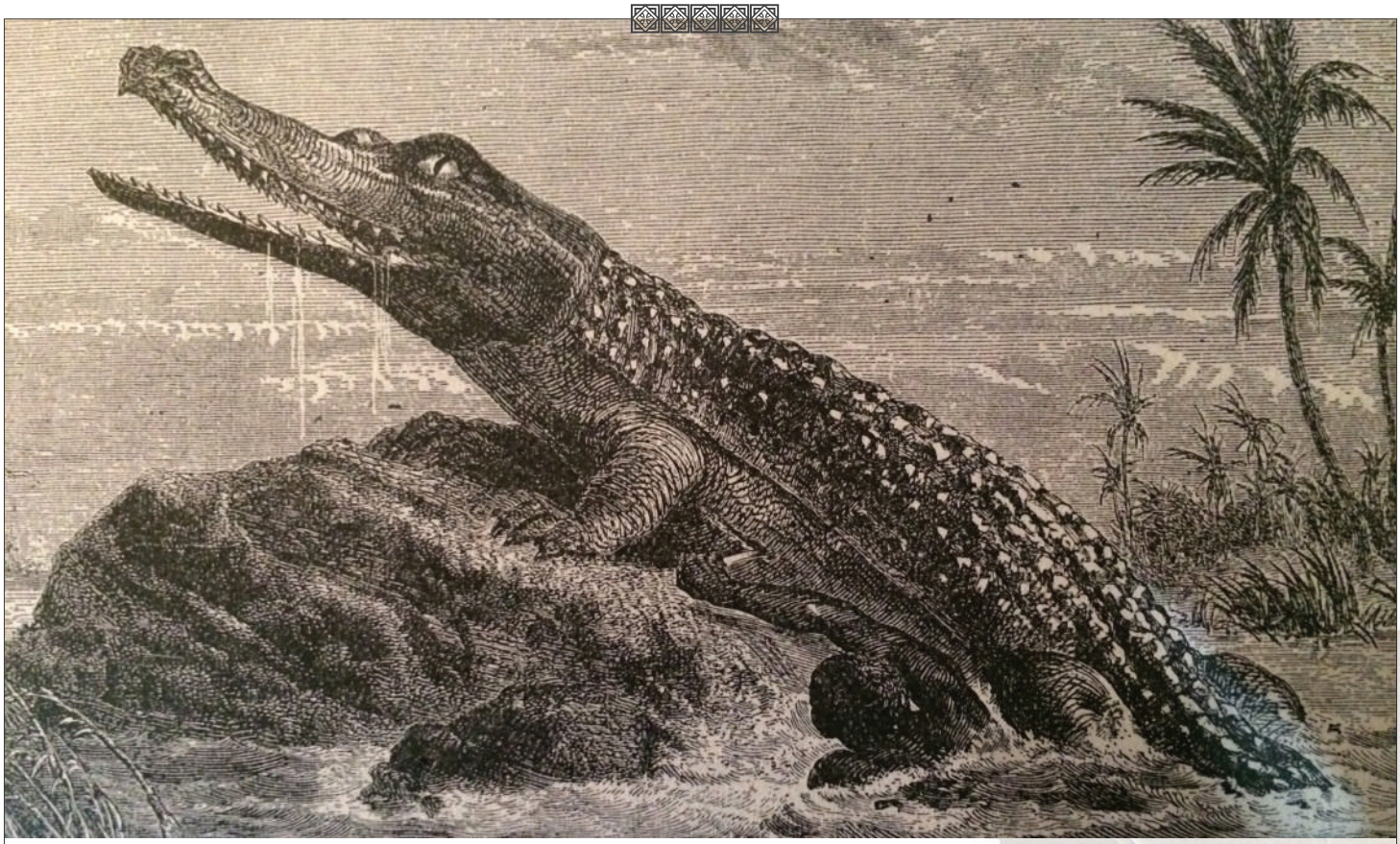
"We left on Friday night by moonlight. Mann Singh wanted to use a vehicle [could translate to be an ox-cart or train locomotive from the Punjabi word gadhi]. Didar Singh and I went on bicycles and the others on donkeys. Ten miles from Kisumu, Didar Singh's bicycle broke down. We had to walk the rest of the way with him pushing the bike," wrote Waryam Singh, the first Secretary of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu.

This group of five men arrived in Luanda at 4a.m, a 17 kilometre-journey from Kisumu and 15 kilometres short of Yala. They slept a few hours and left at 7.30 in the morning to continue walking to Yala. They reached Yala at 9 a.m. and it rained the whole day.

Continues Waryam Singh: "At 5p.m. we congregated at Isher Bishen Das's shop and made an appeal for the New Gurudwara. We got a lot of donations. Seth Alidina donated Rs 140. We returned to Kisumu on Sunday." On this journey, they collected Rs 3,000. The amount pledged is Rs 5,463.

The committee members to Yala were Nihal Singh (Railways); Didar Singh (Railway Clerk and also first President of Siri Guru Singh Sabha); Mann Singh (Railways); Bishen Singh (Municipal); and Waryam Singh (First Secretary of Siri Guru Singh Sabha).

Prior to the Yala journey, this group of men walked from Kisumu to Kibos Station on 9th February 1913 to appeal to the farmers to donate money for the New Gurudwara, covering a distance of 10 kilometres. On arrival at Kibos Station after walking for an hour and a half, they were met by lots of people. They also received cash donations from many people en route for the 'New Gurudwara'. After collecting the donations at Kibos station, they went on to visit a few more farmers. As it was getting late, a farmer named Abdul Majid lent them two ox-carts to travel back to Kisumu. "We started at 6 p.m. and arrived at 8 p.m. at the Kisumu Bomas," records Waryam.



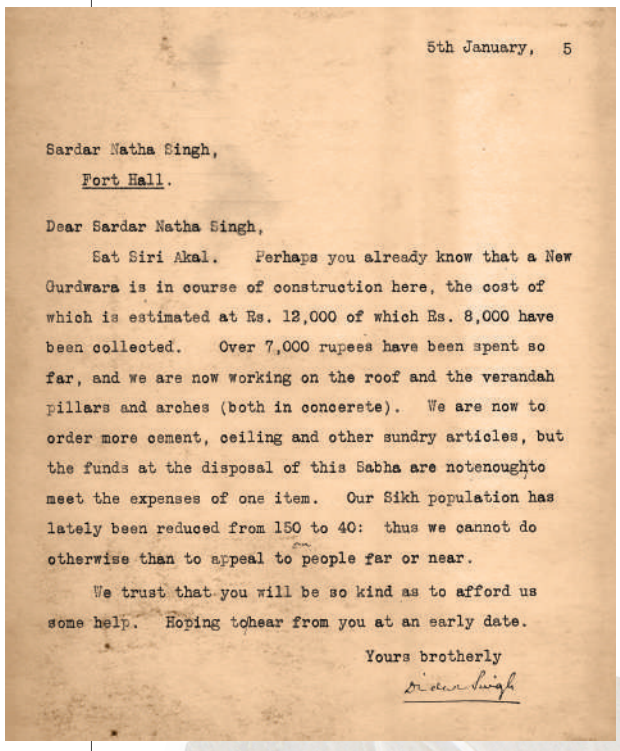
Encountering teeming wildlife was a real danger for early explorers and travellers, including crocodiles, one of Africa's potent giants of uncharted wilderness, as depicted in 'Stanley in Africa' book that chronicled the late 1800s' Africa exploration of Henry M Stanley

PHOTO FROM PRIVATE SCRAPBOOKS

In Kisumu, as in the Punjab, the Sikhs settled in two areas: the artisans in town and the farmers on the plains in Kibos, Kibigori, Miwani, Chemelil and Muhoroni lying on the foothills of the Nandi Hills. With their skill and hard work, this community of fewer than 100 souls decided to build a permanent Gurudwara which stands presently as it was built a century ago, a community who had "strived to raise a substantial monument of the Sikh religion." To appreciate the determination of these men to build the Gurudwara, one has to imagine the scenario at that time. Kisumu was a bartering point for the local Luo and other tribes. The first permanent buildings were those of the Railway. There were no tarmac roads save for murram paths through mosquito-infested swamps, rock-strewn hills and jungle teeming with wildlife. Hippos and leopards were common as was the anopheles mosquito responsible for the death of many from malaria. The people had no access to any communication save for the telegraph and the odd telephone at the railway offices. Their zeal to raise funds to build the New Gurudwara is a testimony of their unwavering faith.

ROOTS OF THE GURUDWARA

"We must build a proper Gurudwara now," said Kartar Singh. This is recorded in the minutes of 28 December 1912.



5th January, 5

Sardar Natha Singh,
Fort Hall.

Dear Sardar Natha Singh,

Sat Siri Akal. Perhaps you already know that a New Gurdwara is in course of construction here, the cost of which is estimated at Rs. 12,000 of which Rs. 8,000 have been collected. Over 7,000 rupees have been spent so far, and we are now working on the roof and the verandah pillars and arches (both in concerete). We are now to order more cement, ceiling and other sundry articles, but the funds at the disposal of this Sabha are notenoughto meet the expenses of one item. Our Sikh population has lately been reduced from 150 to 40: thus we cannot do otherwise than to appeal to people far or near.

We trust that you will be so kind as to afford us some help. Hoping tohear from you at an early date.

Yours brotherly

Writing from Fort Hall, Didar Singh's 1915 letter appeals for funds from Sardar Natha Singh, citing the loss of the Sikh population to a mere 40 from 150 who they pinned hope on in financial support.

The reason is in a letter dated 2nd November, 1913 to Attar Singh Jandu, the Permanent Way Inspector stationed at Mackinnon Road who was invited to lay the foundation stone: "At present we are occupying a Railway building which is in dilapidated condition. The Railway is removing all the buildings including the Gurudwara and the Mohammedan mosque. The idea of the New Gurudwara struck this Sabha about this time late last year. On the 6th January, 1913 a meeting was held to discuss the necessity and on the 6th idem a large Diwan was held at which nearly all the Nyanza Sikhs were present, and a subscription list was opened. About Rs 3,500 were subscribed that day. Originally the plan of this Sabha was to erect a wood and iron building, but subsequently it was considered that a stone building will only obtain better terms from the Government and will be a lasting construction."

It adds: "What we are trying to build is a concrete and cement Gurudwara with a veranda about 50 feet by 50 feet - the same scale as that of Nairobi (Sikh Temple Landhies 1903) with the necessary rest houses for our travellers of which there is a great necessity here."

Subscription lists were opened at Mwanza, Bukoba, Muhoroni, Kericho, Njoro and Mumias with plans to open more donation lists in Mombasa and other towns.

When funds were really short, the Nyanza Sikhs, earning only meagre salaries, agreed to donate a month's salary or more for the completion of the 'New Gurudwara'. On 15th March, 1913 a letter was dispatched from Siri Guru Singh Sabha to Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar to have the lands drawn up in the name of the Chief Khalsa Diwan as illustrated on the facing page.

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Site of old Railway Landhies Gurudwara and where the intital Nishaan Sahib stood.

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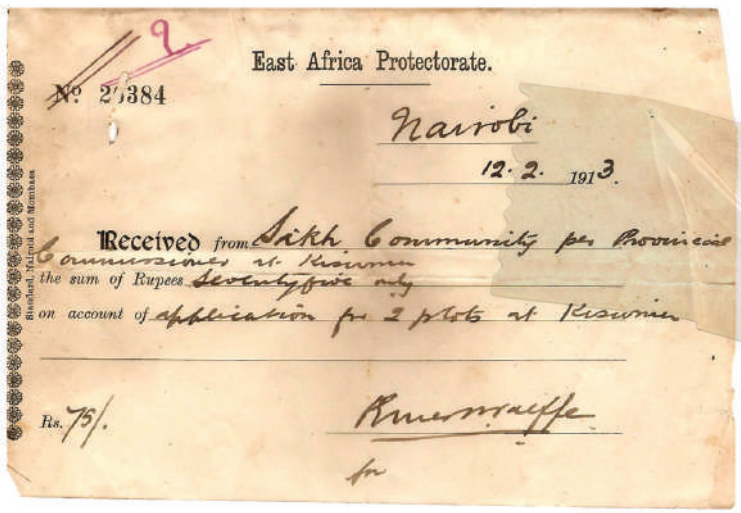
On 27th April 1913, after the recital of the Jap Ji Sahib, the first stone for preparing the foundation was broken by Nihal Singh. The following day, work continued after the morning ardas (a Sikh prayer done before performing or after undertaking any significant task) to prepare the ground for the laying the foundation stone.

The plans for the 'New Gurudwara' though approved by the executive director in July 1913 were not passed by the Medical department pending a Professor Simpson's recommendations. A building permit was finally granted on 26th November, 1913 by the Medical Officer of Health and the District Officer. There is nothing on record to say why the construction of new buildings in town was put on hold. A plausible explanation could be the outbreak of plague.

The date for the laying of the foundation was then fixed for 21st December, 1913.After a long and deliberate discussion, it was resolved that a proper ceremony should be held in the honour of laying the "Foundation Stone".

The sacred duty was dedicated to the 'most respectable person that the Sikh community could procure'. After a lengthy meeting the man chosen was Sardar Attar Singh, the Permanent Way Inspector stationed at Mackinnon Road. "We must confess that had we not perceived in you the indications of a true Sikh and marks of high character, we should have been afraid of approaching you as to a service of this holy nature," wrote Waryam Singh.

LEFT: Original reciept of Rs. 75 that was received from the Sikh Community, in payment to the Provincial Commissioner at Kisumu on application of two plots (No. 87 and No. 88), which became the origin of the very first Gurudwara in Nyanza. RIGHT: Telegraph from the Sabha to Sardar Attar Singh, sent on 5th of December 1913



East Africa Protectorate.

No. 2384

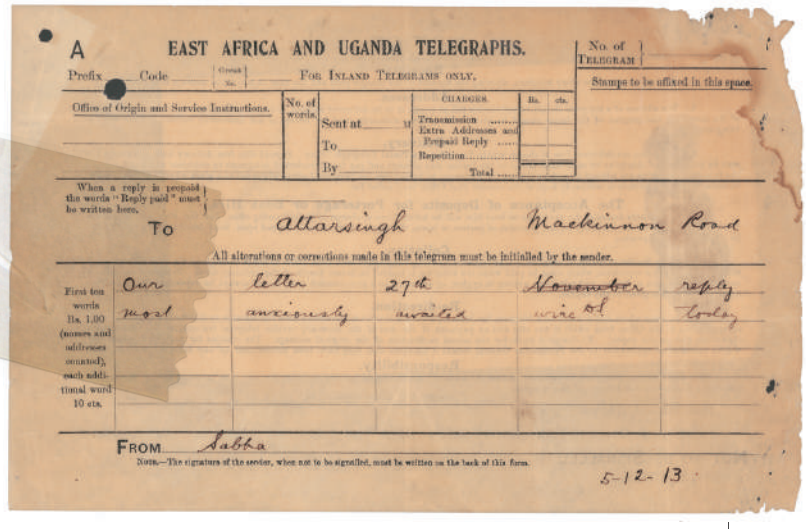
Nairobi

12. 2. 1913.

Received from Sikh Community per Provincial Commissioner at Kisumu the sum of Rupees Seventy five only on account of application for 2 plots at Kisumu

Rs. 75/.

for



A EAST AFRICA AND UGANDA TELEGRAPHS.

No. of Telegram

Prefix Code For Inland Telegrams only.

Stamps to be affixed in this space.

Office of Origin and Service Instructions.

No. of words. Sent at M. To By

Charges: Transmission, Extra Addresses and Prepaid Reply, Repetition, Total — Rs. cts.

When a reply is prepaid the words "Reply paid" must be written here.

To attarsingh Mackinnon Road

All alterations or corrections made in this telegram must be initialled by the sender.

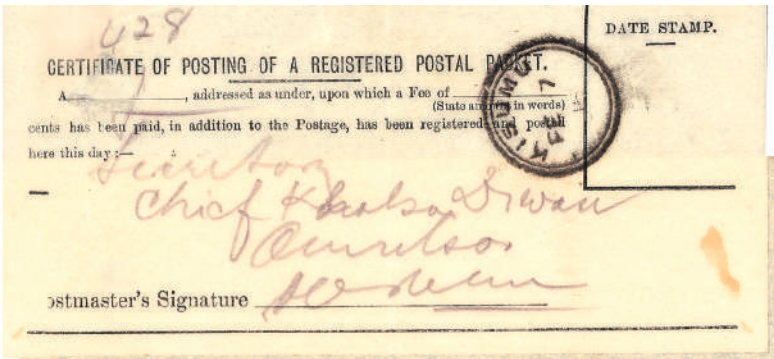
First ten words Rs. 1.00 (names and addresses counted), each additional word 10 cts.

Our letter 27th November reply most anxiously awaited will be! today

From Sabha

Note.—The signature of the sender, when not to be signalled, must be written on the back of this form.

5-12-13



428

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING OF A REGISTERED POSTAL PACKET.

A ——, addressed as under, upon which a Fee of ——— (State amount in words) cents has been paid, in addition to the Postage, has been registered and posted here this day :—

DATE STAMP.

Secretary,
Chief Khalsa Diwan
Amritsar.

Postmaster's Signature

7th February, 6

The Secretary,
The Chief Khalsa Diwan,
Amritsar.

Sir,

I beg to inform you that the new Gurdwra will be ready by the beginning of April next and we trust that it will be possible to hold the opening ceremony on the Baisakhi Day (April 12th).

We are in need of a good Granthi. The man must be an absolute good conduct fellow, able to read and write English and if possible one who has passed the Gyani Class. We propose to give the man a decent salary, if he is able to run a Gurmukhi School for children. If he can hold a class in the evenings to teach grown up people something in English so much the better. I shall be glad to hear from you what you think can be done in this connection, and what salary is required. On receipt of your reply I wish ~~the~~ to lay the matter before this Sabha when a definite reply will be sent you.

I shall be glad to know if you have a registered telegraphic address for your Diwan.

My Committee are anxious to obtain the Rules which your Diwan has issued for the observance of those Sabhas which are affliated with the Diwan. Kindly send me a dozen copies.

Yours respectfully

Singh

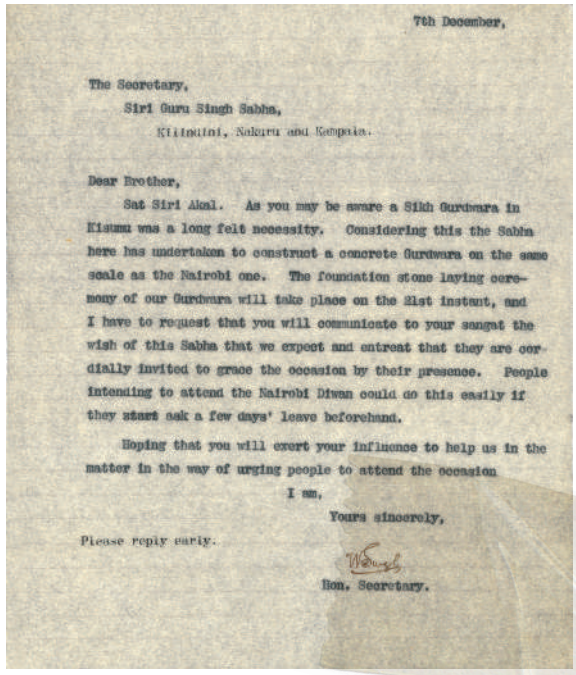
President.

On 15th March, 1913 a letter was dispatched from Siri Guru Singh Sabha to Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar to have the lands drawn up in the name of the Chief Khalsa Diwan

ROOTS OF THE GURUDWARA

On 7th December 1913, at 5 a.m. a congregation of a few people gathered at the Gurudwara plot. After the Kirtan and Ardas at 6.45 a.m., Bhai Megar Singh broke the earth amidst Jakaras of 'Jo Bole So Nihaal! Sat Sri Akaal!'

"Today at about 7 a.m. we, a batch of nearly 40 people, were engaged in digging out the foundations of the building. By that date (21st December) the diggings would be finished." (Letter to Dr Waryam Singh, Mumias, from Honorary Secretary Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu, Waryam Singh 7th December 1913). The Kisumu Gurudwara was modelled like the Nairobi Gurudwara (Landhies Gurudwara 1903) which simplified the work considerably for it had set a precedent. The necessary material for the Gurudwara had been lying in store since June 1912 with exception of a few things. The Sabha had collected large sums of money from the non-Sikhs in the Province and the Sabha saw to it that they were invited.



7th December,

The Secretary,
Siri Guru Singh Sabha,
Kitinaini, Nakuru and Kampala.

Dear Brother,

Sat Siri Akal. As you may be aware a Sikh Gurdwara in Kisumu was a long felt necessity. Considering this the Sabha here has undertaken to construct a concrete Gurdwara on the same scale as the Nairobi one. The foundation stone laying ceremony of our Gurdwara will take place on the 21st instant, and I have to request that you will communicate to your sangat the wish of this Sabha that we expect and entreat that they are cordially invited to grace the occasion by their presence. People intending to attend the Nairobi Diwan could do this easily if they start ask a few days' leave beforehand.

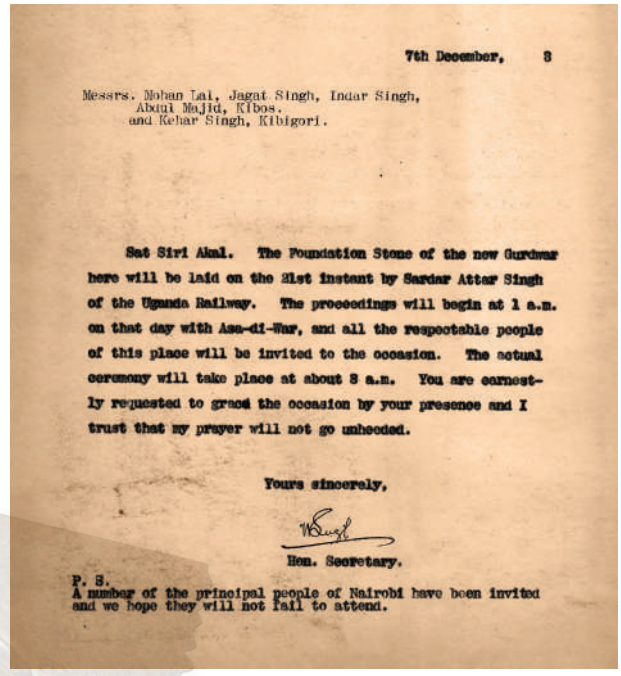
Hoping that you will exert your influence to help us in the matter in the way of urging people to attend the occasion

I am,

Yours sincerely,

Please reply early.

Hon. Secretary.



7th December, 8

Messrs. Mohan Lal, Jagat Singh, Indar Singh,
Abiqi Majid, Kibos.
and Kehar Singh, Kibigori.

Sat Siri Akal. The Foundation Stone of the new Gurdwar here will be laid on the 21st instant by Sardar Attar Singh of the Uganda Railway. The proceedings will begin at 1 a.m. on that day with Asa-di-War, and all the respectable people of this place will be invited to the occasion. The actual ceremony will take place at about 8 a.m. You are earnestly requested to grace the occasion by your presence and I trust that my prayer will not go unheeded.

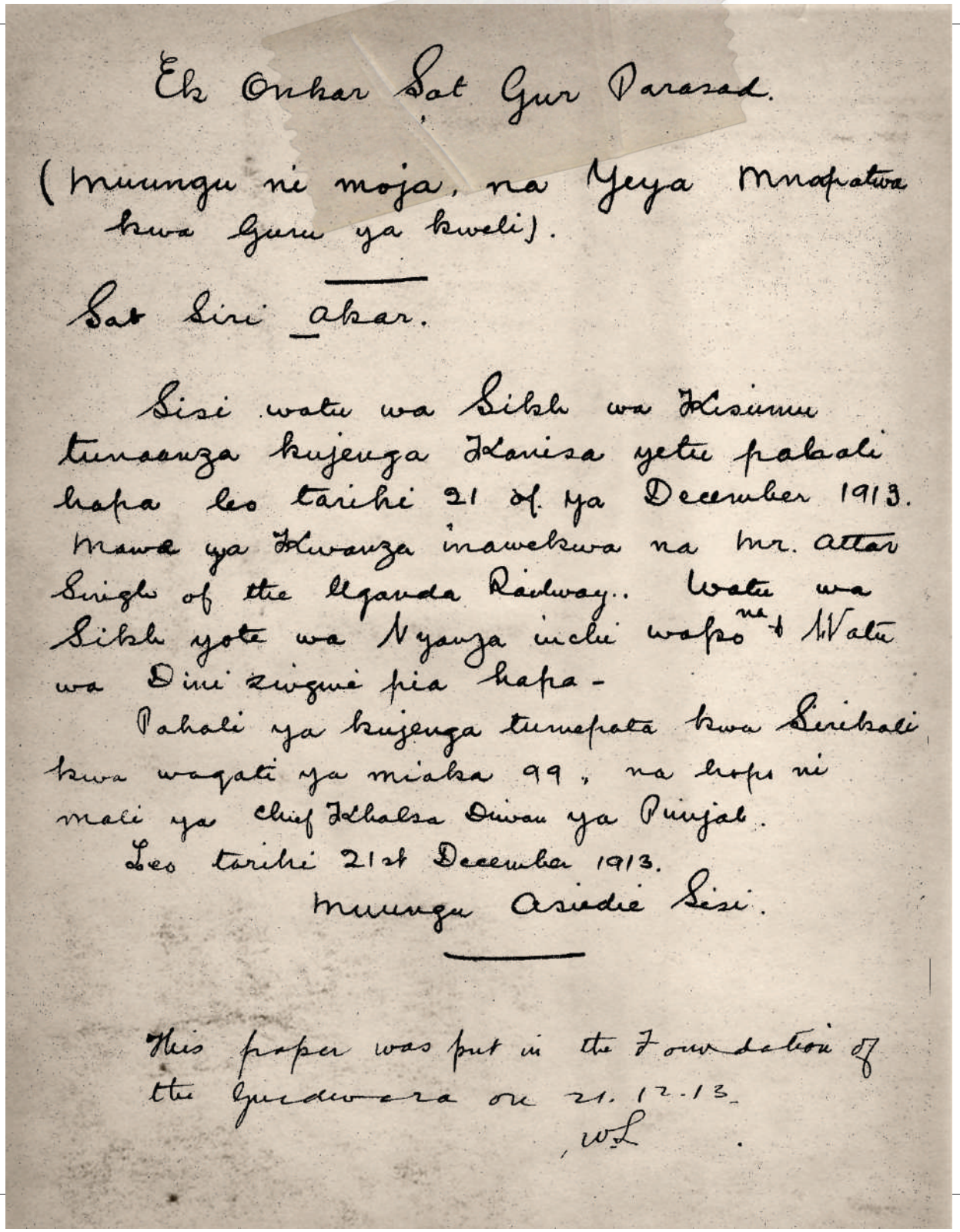
Yours sincerely,

Hon. Secretary.

P. S.
A number of the principal people of Nairobi have been invited and we hope they will not fail to attend.

A 'somewhat substantial monument' is how the Sikhs of Kisumu described the first place of worship in Nyanza during the laying of the foundation stone of the Gurudwara on 21 December 1913. This letter was signed by Waryam Singh and put in the foundation of the Gurudwara.

LETTERS IN THE GLASS 'TIME' VASE



Ek Onkar Sat Gur Parasad.

(Mumungu ni moja, na Yeya Mnapatwa kwa Guru ya kweli).

Sat Siri Akar.

Sisi watu wa Sikh wa Kisumu tunaanza kujenga Khalisa yetu pakali hapa leo tarehi 21 st. ya December 1913. Mawe ya Kwanza inawekwa na Mr. Attar Singh of the Uganda Railway.. Watu wa Sikh yote wa Nyanza inclu wapo na Watu wa Dini zingine pia hapa -

Pahali ya kujenga tumepata kwa Serikali kwa wagati ya miaka 99, na kops ni mali ya Chief Khalsa Diwan ya Punjab.

Leo tarehi 21st December 1913.

Mumungu Asiedie Sisi.

This paper was put in the Foundation of the Gurdwara on 21.12.13.

W.L.

LETTERS IN THE GLASS 'TIME' VASE

20

This paper was put in the foundation of the Gurdwara on the 21.12.13.

EK ONKAR SAT GUR PARASAD.

(God is One and He can be attained by the Grace of the True Guru.)

SAT SIRI AKAL.

THE SIKHS OF THIS PROVINCE HAVING FELT THE GREAT URGENCY OF A PERMANENT PLACE OF WORSHIP OF THEIR OWN IN KISUMU, HAVE STRIVEN DURING THIS YEAR TO RAISE A SOMEWHAT SUBSTANTIAL MONUMENT OF THE SIKH RELIGION IN THIS PLACE AND BY THE GRACE OF THE GURUS THE FOUNDATION OF THE GURDWARA (SIKH CHURCH) HAS BEEN LAID TO-DAY BY BHAI ATTAR SINGH PERMANENT WAY INSPECTOR OF THE UGANDA RAILWAY IN THE PRESENCE OF NEARLY ALL THE SIKH RESIDENTS OF THE NYANZA PROVINCE AND THE LEADING MEMBERS OF THE OTHER COMMUNITIES OF KISUMU.

THE BUILDING PLOT IS SECURED FROM THE GOVERNMENT ON A LEASEHOLD FOR A TERM OF 99 YEARS IN THE NAME OF THE CHIEF KHALSA DIWAN OF THE PUNJAB.

DATED THIS 21ST DAY OF DECEMBER, 1913.

GOD HELP US.

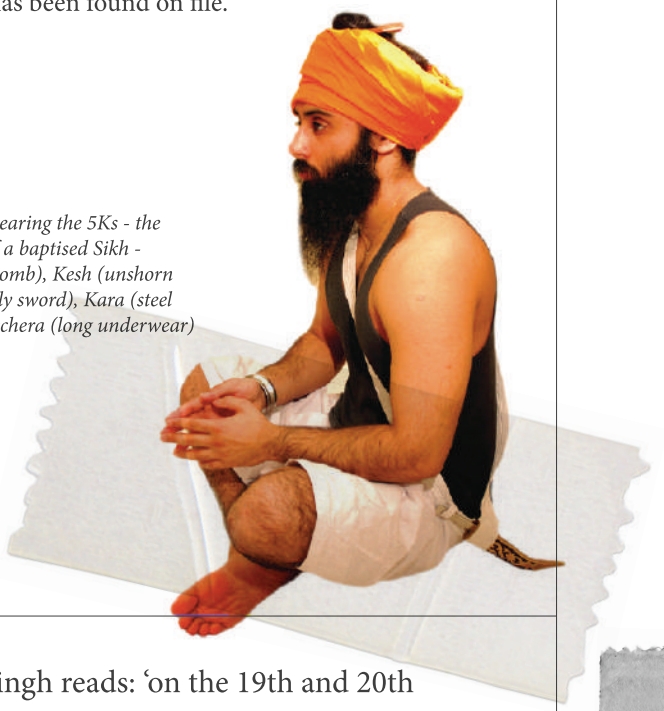
The letters ub Gurmukhi and in English were read to the sangat. Copies were made and filed. Once the foundation stone and the glass vase were on place, the Sikh congregation poured the cement and concrete into the foundation hole. Sardar Attar Singh donated Rs. 300 and photographed the stone stone-laying ceremony. Sardar Waryam Singh requested requested for the photographs in a later communicaiton but nothing has been found on file.

The letter dated 2nd November 1913 from Waryam Singh to Attar Singh gives the account: 'Siri Guru Singh Sabha Nairobi handed a solid sum of Rs 1500, Nyanza Sikhs subscribed 3,500, the Mohammedans an aggregate amount of Rs 1200 of which Rs 800 was secured in cash and the Sahaj Dharies donations amounted to Rs 300. Of the Rs 8,500 on the list, Rs 4,500 had been collected in cash.'

To impress the non-Sikhs and other visitors on the day, the presence of some respectable persons from within the Sikh community was important. Sardar Attar Singh the Permanent Way Inspector, Uganda Railway, stationed at Mackinnon Station was the man chosen. For the momentous occasion – that is 21st December, 1913, the Nyanza Sikhs asked Dr Waryam Singh in Mumias to be the speaker and for Nairobi Siri Guru Singh Sabha to send two priests - Granthi Bhai Harjoth Singh and Raghi Bhai Mit Singh. Preparations were made to host the jatha (congregations) from all the towns in Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda.

The programme as in the letter to Attar Singh by Waryam Singh reads: 'on the 19th and 20th December, in the evenings there will be lectures suitable for the time. The actual ceremony will start at 1.00a.m. on the 21st December when Asa-di-War will take place. The outsiders will be invited from 8.00a.m. when the foundation stone will be laid and the ceremony will end. People can return by down train on leaving here at 6.45p.m.' The "Foundation Stone" ceremony went through splendidly. Prayers were recited and the hymn, *Santa de Karaj aap Khaloya* sung.

At 10.00a.m. Sardar Attar Singh Ji laid the foundation stone and thanked the sangat for the izzat (respect) accorded to him. On top of the foundation stone, he placed a glass vase containing letters in each of the following scripts - Gurmukhi, Kiswahili, Urdu and English written on good heavy paper. The women placed a newsletter, the Khalsa Samachar. A silk keshera (underwear), wooden kangha (a comb to keep the hair groomed), kirpan (sword) and a karha (a steel bangle worn on the right wrist) were also buried with the foundation stone. The letter in Gurmukhi and English were read to the sangat. Copies were made and filed. Once the foundation stone and the glass vase were in place, the Sikh congregation poured the cement and concrete into the foundation hole. Sardar Attar Singh donated Rs 300 and took photographs of the stone laying ceremony. Waryam Singh requested for the photographs in a later letter but nothing has been found on file.



An Amritdhari wearing the 5Ks - the articles of faith of a baptised Sikh - Kanga (wooden comb), Kesh (unshorn hair), Kirpan (holy sword), Kara (steel bracelet) and Kacchera (long underwear)

The programme as in the letter to Attar Singh by Waryam Singh reads: 'on the 19th and 20th December, in the evenings there will be lectures suitable for the time. The actual ceremony will start at 1.00a.m. on the 21st December when Asa-di-War will take place. The outsiders will be invited from 8.00a.m. when the foundation stone will be laid and the ceremony will end. People can return by down train on leaving here at 6.45p.m.'

THE FIRST COMMITTEE

On 1st January 1914, after the foundation stone was laid on 21st December 1913, a new managing committee for Sabha was elected. Votes were casted with chits and the sevadaars elected.

PRESIDENT
Bhai Didar Singh

VICE PRESIDENTS
Bhai Maan Singh
Bhai Sadhu Singh

SECRETARY
Bhai Waryam Singh

VICE SECRETARY
Bhai Santa Singh

TREASURER
Bhai Nihal Singh

ASST TREASURER
Bhai Kartar Singh

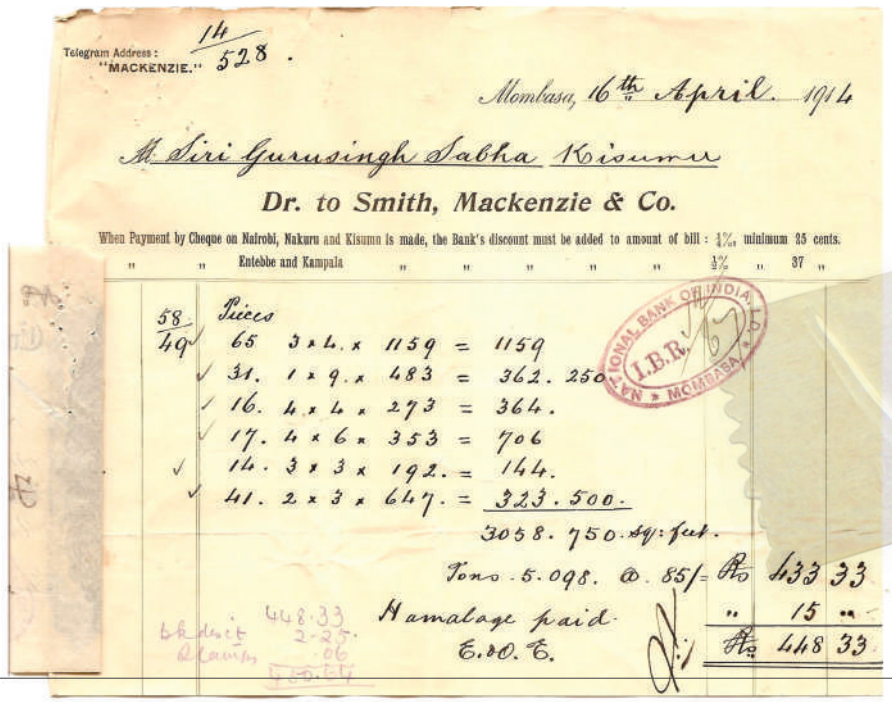
MEMBERS
Bhai Nagura Singh
Bhai Kala Singh – PWD
Bhai Kala Singh – Railway
Bhai Bham Singh – Railway
Bhai Dayer Singh – Railway
Bhai Harman Singh - Railway
Bhai Jagat Singh – Railway

Sardar Didar Singh, the very first Chairman of the newly founded Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. He was voted as leader in a uninaimous count of votes by the Nyanza Sikhs.

THE CONSTRUCTION

Didar Singh, the first President of Siri Guru Singh Sabha wrote to Attar Singh (5th January 1914): "The question of a New Gurudwara which just a few weeks ago was a mere rumour has taken concrete form and our way has been straightened out. Sum on list: Rs 10,000 but amount required is Rs 15,000 – new names pouring in but no one else to look at for pecuniary help – guard us against famine."

Money was always in short supply during the construction, but there seems to have been some discontent within the community. In a letter dated 15th April 1914 addressed to Sardar Attar Singh from Waryam Singh, he writes: "Some half a dozen of the Railway workmen of irresponsible lot are doing their best to go against the movement. They have broken away with about half a dozen more. For the last four weeks they have been holding their meetings independently i.e. we are holding meetings on Saturdays and they on Sundays. "But in spite of all these, the work has been going on in just the same way. The number of actual workers on the building remains the same and we hope to bring the walls to the requisite height by the end of this month. The roofing timber has all been ordered and we are expecting half of it by the end of this week.



Telegram Address: "MACKENZIE." 14/528.

Mombasa, 16th April 1914

M. Siri Gurusingh Sabha Kisumu

Dr. to Smith, Mackenzie & Co.

When Payment by Cheque on Nairobi, Nakuru and Kisumu is made, the Bank's discount must be added to amount of bill : ½%, minimum 25 cents.
" " Entebbe and Kampala " " " " " ½% " 37 "

58/49 Pieces

65	3 x 4. x	1159	=	1159
31.	1 x 9. x	483	=	362. 250
16.	4 x 4 x	273	=	364.
17.	4 x 6 x	353	=	706
14.	3 x 3 x	192.	=	144.
41.	2 x 3 x	647.	=	323.500.

3058. 750 Sq: fut.

Tons 5.098. @ 85/= Rs 433 33
" 15 "
Rs 448 33

Hamalage paid
E.A.C.C.

448.33 2-25. 06

Despite discontent with the community because of which funds became a challenge to collect, the Gurudwara reached out far and wide for donations.

"The total amount of cash in hand today is about Rs 2,300 but the expenditure estimated is about Rs 6,500. We must incur all this at once (roofing timber, cement, iron sheeting, ceiling, brass dome on order, marble slabs, labour, miscellaneous). We hope to collect Rs 3,000 on the list but by and by. Some money is bound to be lost through the action of the above people. We are doing our best to collect money from outside as much as possible. We cannot impress upon you the utmost importance of opening a list in your neighbourhood at once."

The concrete walls were complete by the end of May 1914 with the ox-cart owners providing transport to carry the sand and other necessary material. Preparations were being made for the roof and for that Rs 4,000 to 5,000 was needed. The brass dome was ordered from Amritsar, Punjab. It cost Rs 350. By October 1914, work on the trusses and the moulds for the New Gurudwara's veranda pillars had begun. By 31st May, 1915, the Gurudwara was nearing completion. However, due to shortage of money the four tons of ceiling boards could only be purchased if those who had pledged money would pay up. The annual Diwan in Kisumu that year was cancelled as work on the New Gurudwara was in progress. The 'Darshani' (main door facing the Guru Granth Sahib) door was in the hands of a well-wisher but four more doors measuring 7x4 feet were needed and the Kisumu Siri Guru Singh Sabha committee was looking for help.

On the last day of 1915, the doors with a thickness of 1 ¾ inches were ordered from Nairobi. They were to have wooden 'dillas' (panels) below and glass panes on top. Other items that could not be procured in Kisumu included a 16 three-inch brass hinges for the windows, eight catches for the ventilators above the veranda roof and two cases ordinary glass panes of the biggest available size for the doors, windows and ventilators. Glass in various colours for a few fancy doors and windows were also ordered. Each window frame required 11 pieces of iron rods. If you count the rods in the window frames today, they number 11.

The windows and doors were assembled on site at the Gurudwara. The Chief Khalsa Diwan was asked to send two marble tiles for the new Gurudwara with the jatha coming from India. They were to have the inscription of the date of laying the foundation stone. However there is no record to date of them having arrived.

OPENING CEREMONY

A letter dated 7th February 1916 addressed to the Secretary of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar from Didar Singh states that 'the new Gurudwara will be ready by the beginning of April next (1917) and we trust that it will be possible to hold the opening ceremony on the Baisakhi day (April 12)'.

However, there is nothing to recreate the scene of the opening ceremony as the minutes' book and any correspondence of the time are missing. The little we know is that the committee requested for a Granthi (Sikh priest), a man of good conduct and who spoke English.

The Granthi was required to run a Gurmukhi (Sikh script) school for the children and give English classes to the adults in the evenings. They stated: 'The man must be an absolute good conduct fellow who can read and write English and if possible one who has passed the Gyani (priest) classes'.

At the same time, the committee requested for a dozen copies of the rules which the Diwan (in Amritsar) had issued for the observance of its Sabhas.

The 'New Gurudwara' became the central point for the Nyanza Sikhs. Important Sikh events continued to be celebrated there as they are today. The men who had sailed to Africa to work on a railway had now set up home in Nyanza. Gradually the social fabric of the community began to establish itself with the Gurudwara as a binding place. The century-old mango, jamun and the jack fruit trees in the Gurudwara's courtyard stand as silent observers to this moving story.

A Granthi - one who heads the recitation and care of Guru Granth Sahib Jee at a Gurudwara

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING OF A REGISTERED POSTAL PACKET.

DATE STAMP.

A ____, addressed as under, upon which a Fee of ____ (State amount in words) cents has been paid, in addition to the Postage, has been registered and posted here this day:—

Secretary
Chief Khalsa Diwan
Amritsar

Postmaster's Signature ____

7th February, 6

The Secretary,
The Chief Khalsa Diwan,
Amritsar.

Sir,

I beg to inform you that the new Gurdwra will be ready by the beginning of April next and we trust that it will be possible to hold the opening ceremony on the Baisakhi Day (April 12th).

We are in need of a good Granthi. The man must be an absolute good conduct fellow, able to read and write English and if possible one who has passed the Gyani Class. We propose to give the man a decent salary, if he is able to run a Gurmukhi School for children. If he can hold a class in the evenings to teach grown up people something in English so much the better. I shall be glad to hear from you what you think can be done in this connection, and what salary is required. On receipt of your reply I wish ~~to~~ to lay the matter before this Sabha when a definite reply will be sent you.

I shall be glad to know if you have a registered telegraphic address for your Diwan.

My Committee are anxious to obtain the Rules which your Diwan has issued for the observance of those Sabhas which are affliated with the Diwan. Kindly send me a dozen copies.

Yours respectfully

S Singh

President.

The Gurudwara wrote to The Chief Khalsa Diwan in Amritsar, requesting for a Granthi as the Gurudwara was nearing completion and the opening ceremony scheduled for Baisakhi Day of 1916.

WELCOME TO THE GURUDWARA

If you raise your eyes to the lintel above the Darshani door (main door facing the Sri Guru Granth Sahib), you will see an inconspicuous carving of the Khanda.

The Khanda is the most important symbol of Sikhism. It is a double-edged sword (Khanda) flanked by two kirpans (single-edged swords) in a chakar (circle). The Khanda was introduced by the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Singhji.

The right edge of the Khanda symbolises freedom and authority governed by moral and spiritual values. The left edge of the Khanda symbolises divine justice which chastises and punishes wicked oppressors. This double edged sword at the centre symbolises the creative power of God which controls the destiny of the whole creation. The Chakra being a circle without a beginning or an end represents the eternal. The circle signifies oneness, unity, justice, humanity and morality. The left side signifies the sword of spiritual sovereignty or Piri. The right sword signifies the sword of political sovereignty, Miri.

FIRST DONORS

Celebrating the centennial ceremony of when the foundation stone of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu, was laid, we pay tribute to the donors whose names we traced from the files. We honour them today.

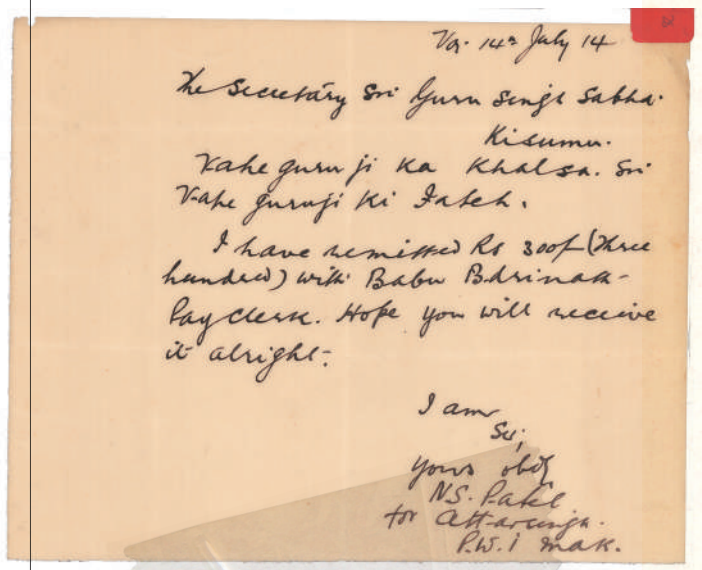
Sardar Attar Singh

Permanent Way Inspector, Uganda Railway.

He laid the Foundation Stone

• Abdul Majid • Ahmed Shah • Ali Bhai Rehamtulla • Baba Mohanlal – Station Master • Bhagat Ram • Bhai Atma Singh – B/Smith Molo • Bhai Bhag Mal • Bhai Bishandas – Kibos • Bhai Chanan Singh – Mombasa • Bhai Dalip Singh – Kilindini • Bhai Gheri • Bhai Gobind Ram • Bhai Gulam Mohd • Bhai Gurdich Singh • Bhai Gyan Singh – Malakisi • Bhai Hari • Bhai Hotu Ram – Malakisi • Bhai Hukam Singh –Mombasa • Bhai Imam Din • Bhai Inder Singh • Bhai Ishwar Singh – Mombasa • Bhai Jagat Singh • Bhai Jeevan Singh • Bhai Kadaka Ram • Bhai Kali Ram • Bhai Kallian Singh – Kilindini • Bhai lal - Luanda • Bhai Lasha Singh – Kilindini • Bhai Makhan Lal • Bhai Mann Singh – Kilindini • Bhai Mehar Singh • Bhai Naranga Singh – Malakisi • Bhai Pala Singh • Bhai Ramji Dass • Bhai Sachan Singh Mistry • Chajoo Ram • Daulat Ram • Dhalu • Dharam Chand • Faqir Singh • Hari Mavji • Harnam Dass • Hasham Jamal • Haslam Jamal • Hira Singh – Muhoroni • Inder Singh - Yala • Isher Dass • Kala Ram • Kirpa Singh • Lal Singh - Njoro • Lalji Ghella • Maya Dass • Noor Din • Rup Lal • Saif Ali Jurmah • Shivram – Muhoroni • Uttam Singh • Virpan Vashram • Vishram Das • Wali Hasham Kurji Wali • Waryam Singh • Major Nand Singh (Faridkot Sappers and Miners, India). In 1936, Rehamtulla Kassam donated a handsome hardwood cupboard in memory of his brother Mohamedbhai Kassam. Until recently, it stood inside the Gurudwara behind the Manji Sahib. The gudhkas (prayer books) and rumalla (sheets to cover the Granth Sahib) and other things were stored in it. Mr. Kurbanali appreciated for doing accounts for Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu gratis.

There were several non-Sikh supporters of the Gurudwara, including Rehmtulla Kasam who donated this cupboard in 1936, in memory of his late brother Mohamedbhai Kasam



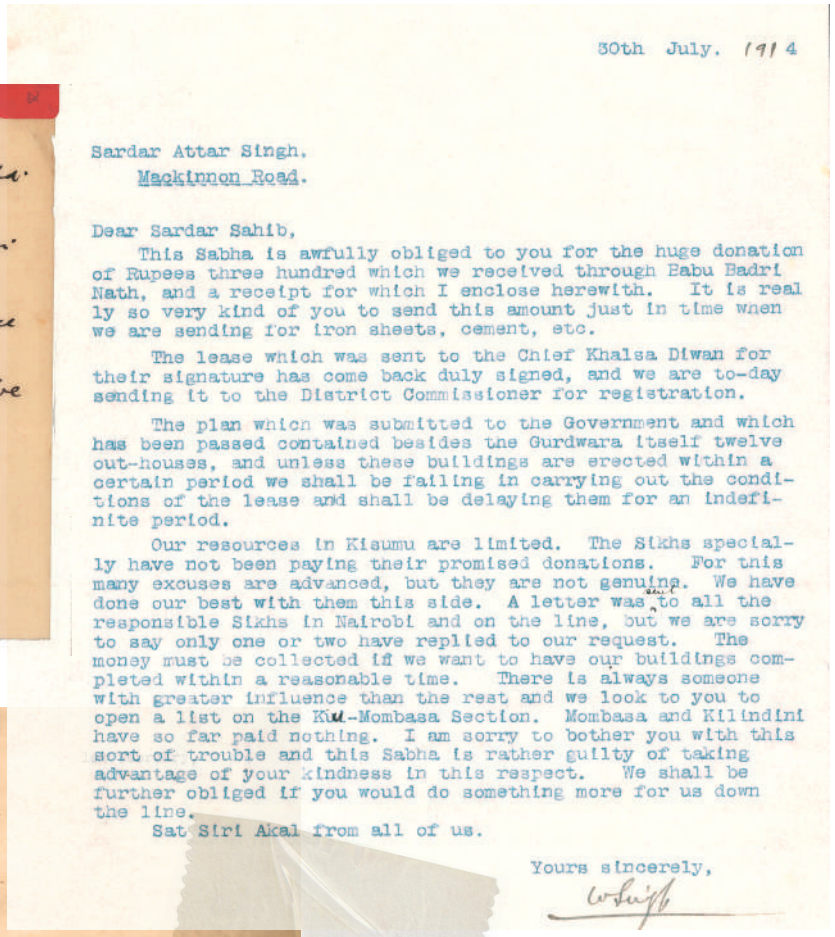
Va. 14th July 14

The Secretary Sri Guru Singh Sabha.
Kisumu.

Vahe guru ji Ka Khalsa. Sri
Vahe guruji Ki Fateh.

I have remitted Rs 300/- (three hundred) with Babu Bdrinaa-
Pay clerk. Hope you will receive
it alright.

I am
Sir,
Yours obdt
N.S. Patel
for Att-arangh.
P.W.I Mak.



30th July. 1914

Sardar Attar Singh.
Mackinnon Road.

Dear Sardar Sahib,

This Sabha is awfully obliged to you for the huge donation of Rupees three hundred which we received through Babu Badri Nath, and a receipt for which I enclose herewith. It is really so very kind of you to send this amount just in time when we are sending for iron sheets, cement, etc.

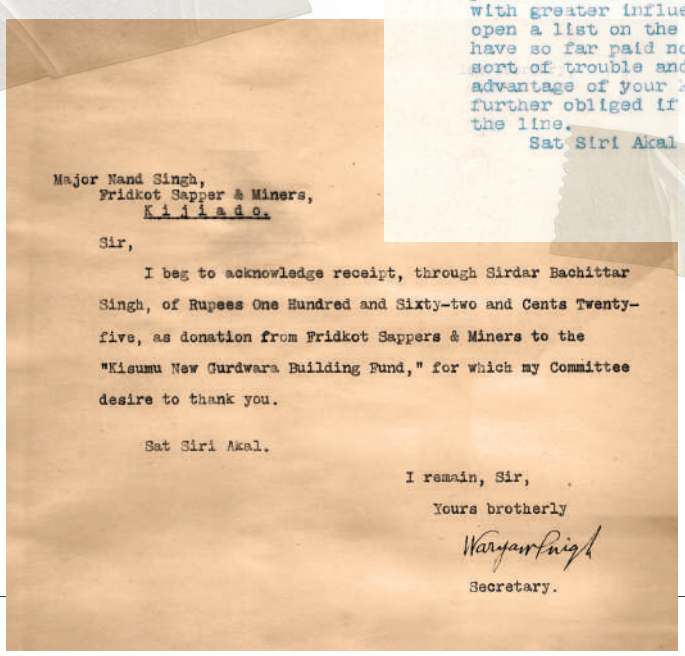
The lease which was sent to the Chief Khalsa Diwan for their signature has come back duly signed, and we are to-day sending it to the District Commissioner for registration.

The plan which was submitted to the Government and which has been passed contained besides the Gurdwara itself twelve out-houses, and unless these buildings are erected within a certain period we shall be failing in carrying out the conditions of the lease and shall be delaying them for an indefinite period.

Our resources in Kisumu are limited. The Sikhs specially have not been paying their promised donations. For this many excuses are advanced, but they are not genuine. We have done our best with them this side. A letter was to all the responsible Sikhs in Nairobi and on the line, but we are sorry to say only one or two have replied to our request. The money must be collected if we want to have our buildings completed within a reasonable time. There is always someone with greater influence than the rest and we look to you to open a list on the Kisumu-Mombasa Section. Mombasa and Kilindini have so far paid nothing. I am sorry to bother you with this sort of trouble and this Sabha is rather guilty of taking advantage of your kindness in this respect. We shall be further obliged if you would do something more for us down the line.

Sat Siri Akal from all of us.

Yours sincerely,



Major Nand Singh,
Fridkot Sapper & Miners,
Kijiado.

Sir,

I beg to acknowledge receipt, through Sirdar Bachittar Singh, of Rupees One Hundred and Sixty-two and Cents Twenty-five, as donation from Fridkot Sappers & Miners to the "Kisumu New Gurdwara Building Fund," for which my Committee desire to thank you.

Sat Siri Akal.

I remain, Sir,
Yours brotherly
Wariam Singh
Secretary.

Officical communications between the Gurudwara and various supporters as donation and help in kind were sought to get the Gurudwara up and running effectively.

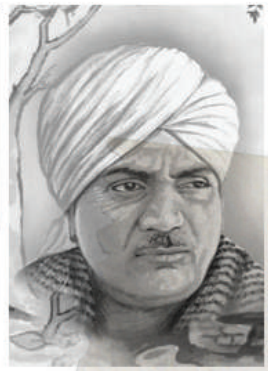
There are many more donors of every faith who contributed in kind and money whose names were probably not recorded from across East Africa and beyond.

FAMOUS VISITORS

As Kenya's Sikh presence, influence and prominence grew over the years, famous faces and personalities began pouring in to experience the new migrants who made this beautiful country their new home.

Artists

Among the earlier recorded visitors, the Punjabi poets Barkat Ram Barkat and Teja Sabir Singh visited the Gurudwara on 31st October, 1957. They were honoured with a Dastar (turban), saropa and Kshs. 501/- each. One of Barkat Ram's famous hymn is 'Jug Jug Jive Khalsa' (may the Khalsa prosper). Nand Lal Noorpuri, a poet, also visited. The singing sisters, Surinder Kaur, Parkash Kaur, prominent singers like Deedar Singh Pardesi, Mohammed Rafi, Assa Singh Mastana have visited the Gurdwara too. Other famous visitors include the Indian film actor and Sikh wrestler Dara Singh.



Barkat Ram Barkat. Nandlal Noorpuri, Surinder Kaur & Prakash Kaur (with Kenya's very own Deedar Singh Pardesi)

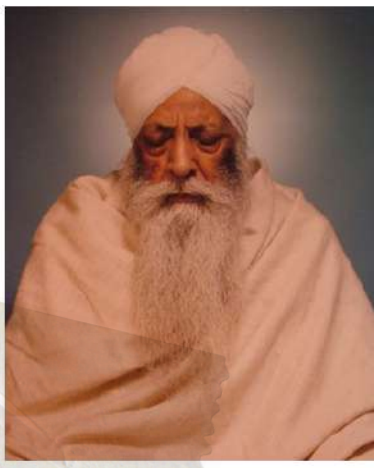
Mohammad Rafi with a Kenyan fan, Assa Singh Mastana, Dara Singh with his fans in Kenya

Political

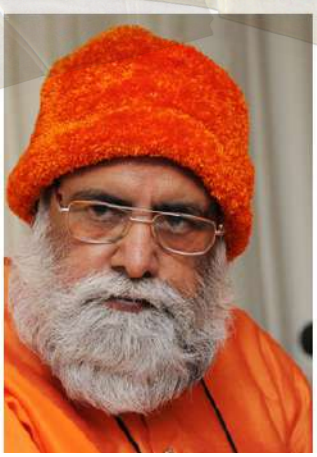
Mrs. Indira Gandhi the late Indian Prime Minister who visited Kenya at the time of Kenya's independence in 1963, was invited to Kisumu by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga to meet some key Nyanza politicians. Indira Gandhi met them at the offices of Ramogi Press in Kisumu including women with whom she discussed issues about the political liberation of women. She paid a visit to the Gurudwara, on a Gurpurab day celebrating Guru Gobind Singh Ji's birthday. Harbans Singh Dhariwal (Minister of Fisheries, Canada) has also visited the Gurudwara.

Faith Leaders

Sant Baba Isher Singh Rare Wale, Baba Mani Singh Ji, Sant Baba Puran Singh Ji, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ji, Param Pujya Brahmrishi Sh. Kumar Swami Ji , Shree Morari Bapu have visited the Gurudwara at different times.



Santa Baba Isher Singh Jee arrives in Kenya; Sant Baba Puran Singh Jee Kerichowale



Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh Jee (GNNSJ); Param Pujya Bhahmrishi Sh. Kumar Swami Jee; and Morari Bapu Jee

EARLY RECORDED EVENTS

As early as the 1912, all important Sikh celebrations in Kisumu were observed such as Baisakhi, the Sikh Gurus' birthdays and prayers in the Gurudwara that was in the Railway Building. It was normal to have the early morning Shabad-kirtan start at 4 a.m. with the sangat arriving from all the lake shore towns.

1912: Sikh Wedding and Amrit Sanchar

The first recorded Sikh wedding in Kisumu is dated 24th August 1912. The marriage of Bhai Teja Singh and Moghi, a Gujarati woman is described as such: 'Teja Singh and Moghi arrived at the Gurudwara at 3 a.m. On the day, five Sikh men and Moghi took the amrit. It is the first recorded amrit sanchar' in Kisumu. The men were Nihal Singh, Kala Singh, Mangal Singh, Jagat Singh and Bhai Singh. The bride's name after the amrit was changed to Ram Kaur. 'Teja Singh was the son of Gohr Singh from the village of Gujar Khan, Rawalpindi District, then Punjab now Rawalpindi in Pakistan. Ram Kaur, nee Moghi was the daughter of Nathu from the village of Gunawoh in Rajpur district, Bandhar.' Recorded in book of minutes dated 19 Nov 1910 – 1916 for Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu.

After this, the anand karaj ceremony continued and Bhai Singh (referring to the giani or priest) read the lava (wedding vows) from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib at 5 a.m., which took 15 minutes. The raghi's diwan continued and finished at 7 a.m. The marriage certificate was given to Bhai Teja Singh dated 24th September 1912, Act of India. Since 1996, the Marriage certificate is signed inside the Gurudwara in front of the congregation. In March 1913, two further recipients of amrit were Bhai Sawan Singh and Bhai Amar Singh.

The first recorded Amrit Sanchar in Kisumu was in 1912 when Nihal Singh, Kala Singh, Mangal Singh, Jagat Singh, Bhai Singh, Moghi (renamed to Ram Kaur) and later Sawan Singh and Amar Singh became Khalsa - the very form of Guru Gobind Singh and the complete Sikh of Guru Nanak.

1912: Gurpurb, Guru Nanak Dev Ji

Guru Nanak's birth anniversary on 28th November 1912, was celebrated with a lot of festivity and evening kirtan diwan. The 'Railway' Gurudwara was decorated on Saturday. All Kisumu 'adhmi' (people) attended, including the Musulman and Khoja communities. Waryam Singh recited a katha (poem) in Urdu and a shabad (hymn) recited was:

॥ ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings

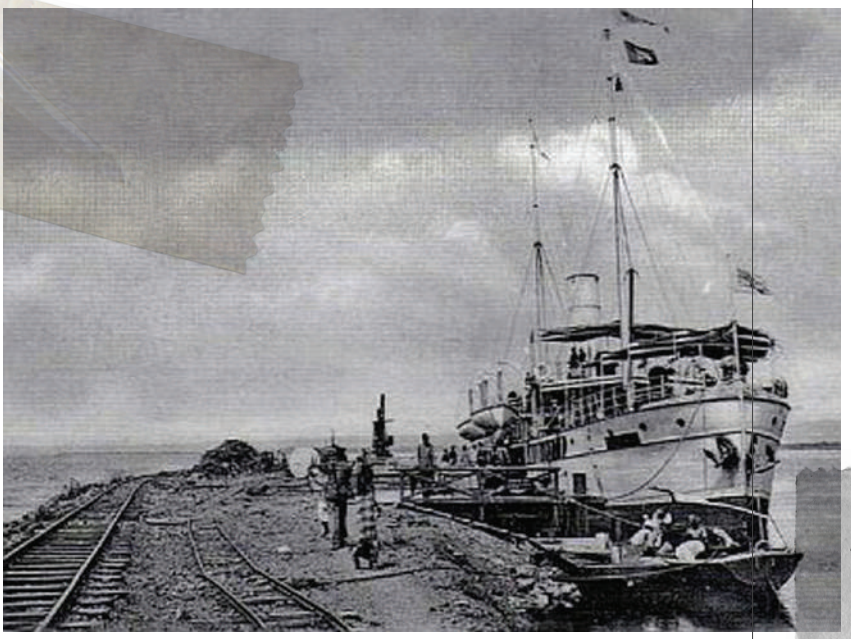
ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥

From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?

The verse is by a Muslim saint, Bhagat Kabir, and is recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

1913: Kampala Sikhs visit Kisumu

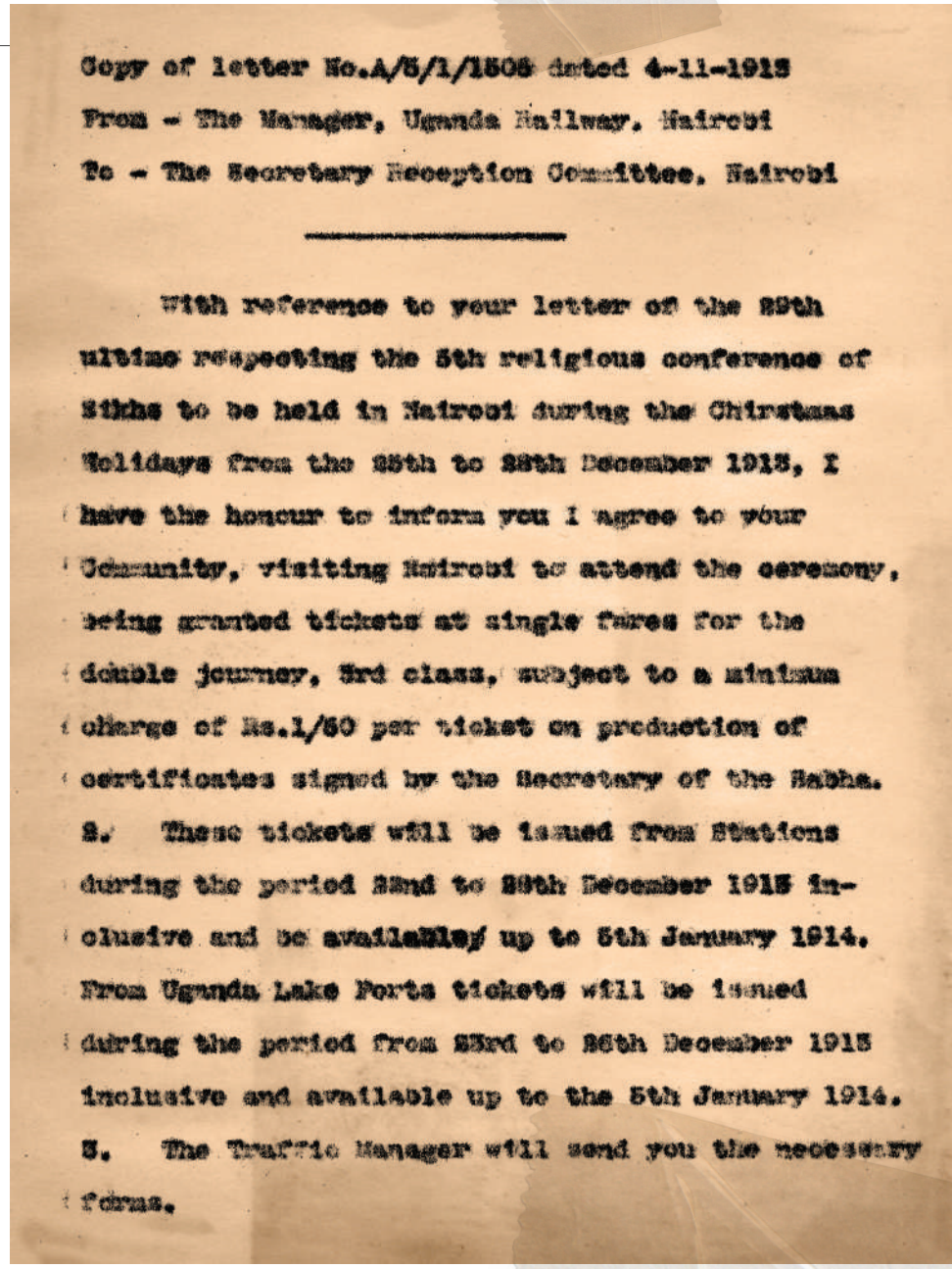
In February 1913, a group of Sikhs from Kampala were travelling to India. At 6 p.m. the steamer arrived at the Kisumu pier. They were not allowed to disembark because they were quarantined by the doctor. The Nyanza Sikhs then organized the dinner to be transported to the pier by ox-cart at 8 p.m. The meal consisted of puria (deep fried chappati), potato curry, maa di dhal (lentil), and fine sugar for the sweetmeat - all blessed by the priest. At 8.45 p.m. the Sri Guru Granth Sahib was taken to the pier which by now had been decorated by the sangat. This was followed by a diwan and an appeal again made for the New Gurudwara. A total of Rs 302 was collected and the programme concluded at 10.30 p.m.



Steamer at the shores of Kisumu

1913: 5th Religious Conference of The Sikhs

The 5th religious conference of the Sikhs was held in Nairobi during the Christmas holidays from the 26 to 28th December 1913. The manager of the Uganda Railway in Nairobi approved single fares for the double journey to a minimum of Rs 1/50 per ticket on production of certificates signed by the secretary of the Sabha.



Copy of letter No.A/5/1/1508 dated 4-11-1913
From - The Manager, Uganda Railway, Nairobi
To - The Secretary Reception Committee, Nairobi

With reference to your letter of the 29th ultimo respecting the 5th religious conference of Sikhs to be held in Nairobi during the Christmas Holidays from the 26th to 28th December 1913, I have the honour to inform you I agree to your Community, visiting Nairobi to attend the ceremony, being granted tickets at single fares for the double journey, 3rd class, subject to a minimum charge of Rs.1/50 per ticket on production of certificates signed by the Secretary of the Sabha.

2. These tickets will be issued from Stations during the period 22nd to 28th December 1913 inclusive and be available up to 5th January 1914.

3. From Uganda Lake Ports tickets will be issued during the period from 23rd to 26th December 1913 inclusive and available up to the 5th January 1914.

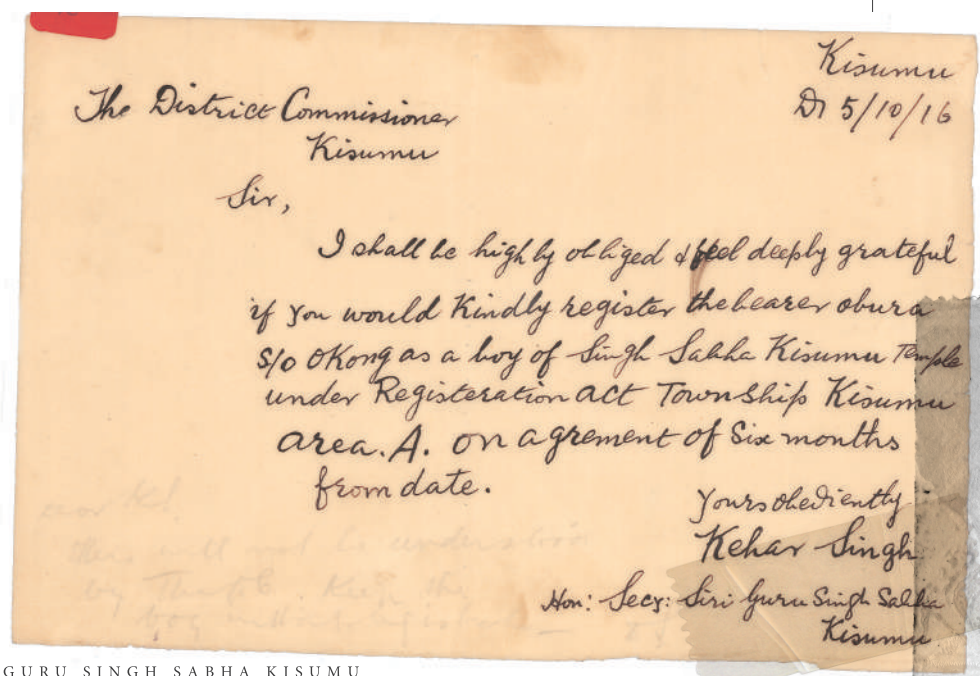
4. The Traffic Manager will send you the necessary forms.

1930s: Donation of Town Clock

In the 1930s, the town began to take shape as we know it today which is discernable from the architecture and the dates and names of families inscribed on them. In 1938, the Kasam brothers – Mohamed, Alibhai, Hassen and Rahimtala Kasim – erected the town clock in memory of their father Kasim Lakha Kasam on the main highway Oginga Odinga, which still stands as a landmark. In 1936, Rehamtulla Kasam presented a beautiful hardwood cupboard to the Gurudwara in memory of his brother Mohamedbhai. Until recently, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the prayer books and rumallas were kept in it.

1914: Registration of Obura, a bearer

A letter written to the District Commissioner in Kisumu to register the bearer Obura son of Okong as a boy of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu for six months under Registration Act township of Kisumu



Kisumu
Dt 5/10/16

The District Commissioner
Kisumu

Sir,

I shall be high by obliged & feel deeply grateful if you would kindly register the bearer obura s/o Okong as a boy of Singh Sabha Kisumu Temple under Registeration act Township Kisumu area. A. on agrement of Six months from date.

Yours obediently
Kehar Singh
Hon: Secy: Siri Guru Singh Sabha
Kisumu

PAST SEWADAARS

Sewadars from the past like Sardar Atma Singh Banwaitt, Sardar Aridhaman Singh Thind, Sardar Joginder Singh Behan, Sardar Sham Singh Saranh, Sardar Bachithar Singh and Sardar Mohinder Singh Mand, Sardar Harbans Singh Sandhu and Dr. Tarlok Singh Sihra have been instrumental in keeping the administration of the Gurudwara up to date.

BUILDING & RENOVATIONS

Many Sikh families and some non-Sikhs from Kibos, Kisumu and other towns have generously donated or provided materials for the various building and renovation projects undertaken in the past and recent times of our Gurudwara and its additional facilities.

• One of the first kitchen renovations was done by the Sembhi family of Kakamega in 1960s • The ablution blocks, offices and cementing the courtyard is the courtesy of many Sewadars of the Gurudwara. Bishan Singh Hayer Family contributed towards cementing of the fore court yards in 1960s • The perimeter wall with coloured bricks and the main gate of the Gurudwara have been aesthetically remodeled. The Khanda on the outside of the stone wall was donated by Sardar Darshan Singh Gahir of Nairobi • Charanjit Singh Hayer as Chairman and later Project Manager, oversaw the re-development of the Gurudwara's assembly hall and the accommodation wing for the gianis (priests) and guests from the original iron sheet buildings. The assembly hall took two years to construct and was in use by July 1991 • The foundation stone was laid by Sardar Chanan Singh Chatthe on 29th January 1989 • The opening ceremony was performed on 10th January 1992 by Harjit Singh Pandhal and Amarjit Singh Pandhal, grandsons of the pioneer Sardar Jagat Singh Pandhal. The building contractors were Jagjit Singh Joinery Works. Over the years other notable improvements have included improvements to the langar hall, kitchen shed, kitchen facilities, the entire replacement of the roof of the main Gurudwara, modernization of the interior, replacement of the domes and building of the main gate facing Mosque road. A borehole and generator were added as additional services too • In 1998 the Gurudwara was closed for two years and all functions held in the social hall while the original roof was replaced because it was beyond repair • Sewa of the domes and the main gate was undertaken by Sardar Surjit Singh Pandhal and family, who carried out a superb job. A crystal chandelier inside the Darbar was courtesy of Darshan Singh Basutta family • In April 2013 the original Nishan Sahib was replaced by Sardar Swarnjit Singh Bhurji of Farm Engineering Works with a 110-foot tall one that is raised and lowered by an electric motor. The Nishan Sahib was taken to the Gurudwara on 9th April, 2013. The Sangat gathered to welcome the new Nishan Sahib and did sewa of installing it ready for Vaisakhi 13th April, 2013

The Nishaan Sahib is not only the physical marker of the Sikh place of worship but it also serves as a spiritual marker of Sikh identity and philosophy, directing people in need to a pace of refuge or resting place. The Nishaan Sahib is so engrained in the Sikh faith that it is remembered daily in Sikh prayers of Ardaas and Chaupai Sahib. It is implanted outside every Gurudwara and a matter of religious injunction, must hoist at each and every building of the Gurudwara.

The monument represents peace, humility, compassion and acknowledgement of the essential divinity within every living being.

The original Manji Sahib (the sacred diwan bed) where the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is placed during the day was made by Sardar Teja Singh Chaggar (7th Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu 08/07/1933 to 13/04/1947). This Manji Sahib was refurbished to put a new 'Gumbath' which shades the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Sewa was done by Shingara Singh • A new wing is being added as we write. It will include a board room, six ensuite guestrooms, and improved public and administration facilities • To celebrate the centennial celebrations of laying the foundation stone of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu and Kenya's 50 years of independence, a monument is being erected for the town's round about next to the Gurudwara on Mosque Road • The rebuilding of the Gurudwara has greatly benefitted from guidance and advice by Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singhji of Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha. He has played a major role in the refurbishment of the five Sikh Shrines in India

Guru Nanak had a vision of selfless service that transcended the human perception of time. In this regard, the Nyanza Sikhs have demonstrated this in the preceding century.

THROUGH TIME & SPACE

Changing faces of the Gurudwara over the decades

ROLL OF HONOURS

CHAIRMEN - SIRI GURU SINGH SABHA KISUMU

S. DIDAR SINGH SANDHU
23/11/1910 – 21/11/1916

S. INDER SINGH KALA SINGH
30/09/1922 – 28/04/1923

S. FAKIR CHAND
28/04/1923 – 21/02/1932

S. KEHAR SINGH SANDHU
21/02/1932 – 08/06/1932

S. KARTAR SINGH
08/06/1932 – 21/01/1933

PARTAP SINGH
21/01/1933 – 08/07/1933

S. TEJA SINGH CHAGGER
08/07/1933 – 13/04/1947

S. UTTAM SINGH BHUI
15/03/1947 – 03/05/1947

S. AMAR SINGH DHANJAL
26/11/1947 – 28/02/1950

S. PRITAM SINGH
28/02/1950 – 01/02/1952

S. UTTAM SINGH BHUI
01/02/1952 – 21/12/1955

S. SANT RAM SINGH REHAL
14/09/1957 – 12/01/1962

S. AMAR SINGH DHANJAL
12/01/1962 – 13/04/1964

S. MOOL SINGH SANDHU
13/04/1964 – 13/04/1970

S. JOGINDER SINGH BEHAN
13/04/1970 – 13/04/1974

S. ATTMA SINGH BANWAITT
13/04/1974 – 13/04/1976

S. SHAM SINGH SARANH
13/04/1976 – 13/04/1978

S. RANJIT SINGH BRAH
14/04/1978 – 13/04/1980

S. JOGINDER SINGH BEHAN
13/04/1980 – 13/04/1982

S. SURJIT SINGH PANDHAL
13/04/1982 – 13/04/1984

S. JASWANT SINGH PADHAAL
13/04/1984 – 13/04/1985

S. CHANAN SINGH CHATTHE
13/04/1985 – 14/04/1987

S. CHARANJIT SINGH HAYER
14/04/1987 – 13/04/1989

S. CHANAN SINGH CHATTHE
13/04/1989 – 13/04/1991

S. JOGINDER SINGH BEHAN
13/04/1991 – 13/04/1993

S. SURJIT SINGH PANDHAL
13/04/1993 – 13/04/1995

S. CHANAN SINGH CHATTHE
13/04/1995 – 13/04/1997

S. HARJIT SINGH PANDHAL
13/04/1997 – 13/04/1999

S. CHARANJIT SINGH HAYER
13/04/1999 - 13/04/2001

S. DARSHAN SINGH BASUTA
13/04/2001 – 13/04/2003

S. SARNAGAR SINGH HAYER
13/04/2003 – 13/04/2005

S. MOHINDER SINGH BRAH
13/04/2005 – 13/04/2007

S. SATWANT SINGH CHATTHE
13/04/2007 – 13/04/2009

S. BHALVINDER SINGH PANDHAL
13/04/2009 – 13/04/2011

S. HARVINDER SINGH SIDHU
13/04/2011 – 13/04/2013

S. CHARANJIT SINGH HAYER
13/04/2013 TO-DATE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sitting front row, from left - Satwant Singh Chatthe (Member); Darshan Singh Basuta (Trustee); Harjit Singh Pandhal (Trustee); Charanjit Singh Hayer (Chairman); Channan Singh Chatthe (Trustee); Mohinder Singh Brah (Trustee); Sarnagar Singh Hayer (Vice Dispensary Manager); Harvinder Singh Sidhu (Member); Jaswinder Singh Sidhu (Library Manager); Parminder Singh Saini (Dispensary Manager); Mohinder Singh Nagra (Member); Surinder Singh Khera (Vice Secretary); Harminder Singh Saini (Treasurer); Amarjit Singh Pandhal (Member); Pal Singh Aujla (Vice School Manager). Standing, right to left - Raghbir Singh Chatthe (Vice Chairman); Amarjeet Singh Brah (Langar Jathedar); Prithpal Singh Pandhal (Member); Swaranjit Singh Bhurji (School Manager); Satinderpal Singh Brah (Vice Treasurer); Ravinder Singh Brar (Member). INSET - Sukhmandar Singh Brar - Secretary (left); Surjit Singh Pandhal - Trustee (right)

PAST CHAIRMEN

SIRI GURU SINGH SABHA KISUMU

• Didar Singh Sandhu • Inder Singh Kala Singh • Fakir Chand • Kehar Singh Sandhu • Partap Singh • Teja Singh Chaggar • Uttam Singh Bhui • Sant Ram Singh Rehal • Amar Singh Dhanjal • Mool Singh Sandhu • Joginder Singh Behan • Atma Singh Banwaitt • Sham Singh Saranh • Ranjit Singh Brah • Jaswant Singh Pandhal • Channan Singh Chatthe • Surjit Singh Pandhal • Harjit Singh Pandhal • Charanjit Singh Hayer • Darshan Singh Basuta • Sarnagar Singh Hayer • Mohinder Singh Brah • Satwant Singh Chatthe • Bhalvinder Singh Pandhal • Harvinder Singh Sidhu

SELECTED PROFILES

CHAIRMEN - SIRI GURU SINGH SABHA KISUMU

Sardar Didar Singh Sandhu
1910 ~ 1916

The history of Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu was made on 19th November, 1910 when fifteen Gurusikhs held a Kirtan Diwan, Path and Ardaas in Railway Landhian, Kisumu. Most of these Sikhs were employees of the Railway and the Post Office and on that very day they decided to have diwans every Saturday. Bhai Isher Singh raised the important matter of forming a committee and on November 23rd 1910 the formation of the first executive committee took place. (Recorded in the book of minutes dated 19th November 1910 – 1916 for Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu) The committee members were S. Didar Singh (Chairman); S. Harnam Singh (Vice Chairman); and S. Waryam Singh (Secretary). Sardar Didar Singh was a loyal Sewadar and pillar of strength in initiating building of Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. (With this write, may be we include picture of place of first Nishan Sahib at old Railway Landhis)

Fakir Chand Mayor
1923 ~ 1932

He was born on 11th November, 1878 in Hiran village, Ludhiana District in Punjab, India. His grandson Satya V. Sood is the author of Victoria's Tin Dragon – a railway that built a nation (Vanguard Press 2007). n 1897, he received letter from his friend in Nairobi Mathra Dass Kapila about the opportunities in Africa. A verse from the letter reads: Ram nam kimloot hai, Loot jai so loot Phir piche pachtae ga Jab pran jayenge choot (In short, the verse is about the opportunities abound in the new land). On arrival in Mombasa, the young man was employed as a clerk in the Uganda Railway. In 1902, he was transferred to Kisumu, where he was employed as a Goods Clerk. In 1907, he was promoted as Assistant Station Master, Kisumu and in 1909 as the first Indian Station Master - a post he held until his retirement 22 years later in 1931. A keen farmer, he had a farm in Kibos. He was not only a founder member of the Arya Samaj but also served as chairperson of the Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu for nine years.

Sardar Partap Singh Hans

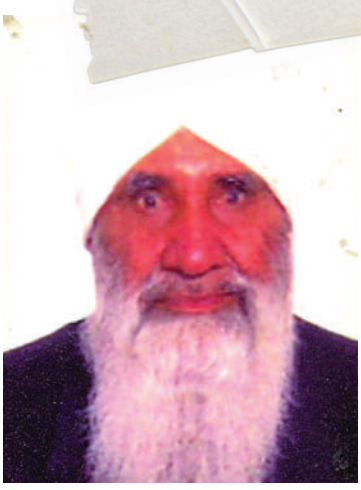
1933 ~ 1933

He was president of Siri Guru Singh Sabha for six months during which time he was stationed in Kisumu working for the Kenya Meteorological Department. “He oversaw the day to day operations of the Gurudwara. He was about 40 years old and the Gurdwara had about 50 regular attendees,” writes Mohinder Singh Hans his eldest son from Orlando, USA.

Sardar Santram Singh Rehal

1957 ~ 1962

He was the son of Nand Singh Rehal. He was born in 1907 at Dulchi Mojra, India. He came to Kenya in 1932 and worked at Miwani Sugar Mills up to 1942. Later he settled in Kisumu where he set up a joinery/blacksmith workshop and started operating as a building contractor. He was elected the 12th Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha on 14th September 1957 and continued to serve his term successfully until 12th January 1962.



Sardar Channan Singh Chatthe

1985 ~ 1987, 1989 ~ 1991, 1995 ~ 1997

Born in Kibos on 26th July, 1927, Sardar Channan Singh Chatthe reminisces about the early days. His father, Bhai Santa Singh arrived in Kenya in 1918, brought by his paternal uncle (Thaiya) Sardar Jagat Singh Pandhal, a pioneer of the sugar farming industry. “When the Gurudwara was built, all the Indian communities – the Ismailis, Gujaratis, Muslims and Hindus – contributed because it was the first to be built. The rest - the mosques and Hindu temples - came after,” he says. Channan Singh was a pupil at Government Indian High School in Kisumu from 1934 to 1945. During that period, all the school children stayed at the Kisumu Guest House on the grounds of Siri Guru Singh Sabha. An African cook was employed to cater for the boys. There were about ten families and over the weekend they would return to Kibos. There were no tarmac roads in the 1930s. In 1968 after Kenya’s independence in 1963, Kisumu Indian High School was renamed Kisumu Boys High School. A successful veteran farmer, he is the founder of the first sugar cane factory by a Sikh in Kenya.

Sardar Charanjit Singh Hayer

1987 ~ 1989, 1999 ~ 2001, 2001 ~ Current

Born on 10th July 1946 in Kakamega, he graduated in 1972 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. Our current chairman's other achievements include Past chairman - of Simba Club Kisumu, Nyanza Hockey Association, Lions Club Kisumu Host, founding member and on the board of Governors of Sabatia Eye Hospital, International Trustee of Religions of Peace and Trustee of Guru Nanak Niskam Sewak Jatha (GNSSJ), Kenya. "He says that in the 1950s, there was no Gurudwara in Kakamega, except for Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Kisumu. "We would leave Kakamega early morning at 4 a.m. to be in Kisumu at 5 a.m. At that time, there were only two Sikh families in Kakamega." he recalls

He adds: "My late father, Bishan Singh Hayer, was born in the village of Littra in the Punjab. In 1937, he landed in Mombasa aboard a ship. He was only 22 years old." He would drive us to Kisumu in his pick-up for all important functions held at the Gurudwara. "It was a very busy Gurudwara," he recalls. "At meal times, we ate in the veranda circling around it. I remember eating puria and alu served on a sheet of a newspaper." His first tenure as chairman was 1987 to 1989 and the second term from 1999 to 2001. He previously served as the youngest committee member of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu.

"This Gurudwara is a superstructure built of concrete in the name of 'kaar sewa' or voluntary labour. It will stand for another 100 years. The windows and doors are original," he says. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu has been the hub of the Sikh community especially for the early travellers between Uganda and Tanzania. "The Gurudwara has served the people well. It was built with a lot of love. They made timber moulds to fill in with cement and aggregate. It was voluntary labour by the Sikhs bringing into force the concept of Kaar Sewa (Sikh voluntary labour). The original brass dome was from Amritsar and the copper plating on it was done locally," he says

"The only thing we have had to change of the Gurdwara was the roof because it leaked beyond repair. It was a Mabati roof (roofing sheet). The new upgrades from 2013 include a new ablution block, board room and accommodation for VIP visitors".

Sardar Surjit Singh Pandhal

1982 ~ 1984, 1993 ~ 1995

Born in India in 1935 and educated there, his father (also a pioneer settler in Kibos brought by his cousin Jagat Singh Pandhal) sent for him in 1952. "What really amazes me about our ancestors who first settled here is their bravery in walking into unknown destinations. We owe them a lot." he says. He continued with the sugar cane farming in Kibos and successfully expanded the business to include transport and farm machinery. The family contributed to the new roof and dome of the Gurudwara. "The 1950's was a tough time for the community. There was no work and poverty was rampant. The Gurudwara became the social hub of the Sikhs. It was a big community and all the Sikhs came here." he recalls.

Sardar Harjit Singh Pandhal

1997 ~ 1999

Born in Kibos on 10th December 1940, his earliest memories are that of living in Kibos by the river. He is the grandson of Sardar Jagat Singh Pandhal, a pioneer of the sugar cane industry in Kenya. He says: "In those days, we travelled by ox-cart from Kibos to the Gurudwara which took 2-3 hours. We would sit on Makekas (woven mats) and if it rained, we would swing them on top of our heads. There were no roads then, just paths and we struggled to reach home from Kisumu. En route, we would see animals like bushbuck, hyenas, waterbuck and pythons." He adds: "There was a lot of jungle and bush in those days. The main Kisumu to Ahero road was built around 1948, followed by the rest in 1950." Today, Harjit Singh Pandhal carries on the work of his grandfather and father, operating a large-scale farm in Chemelil with his sons. In 1970, he completed the East African Rally with his brother-in-law Surinder Singh Mangat and late friend Manmohan Singh.

Sardar Harvinder Singh Sidhu

2011 ~ 2013

Popularly known as Baboo, he is the grandson of Kala Singh. Kala Singh and Kishen Singh Sidhu were brothers who arrived here from India in 1908. They started farming in Kibos under the name Kala Singh and Kishen Singh Sidhu. The brothers donated one acre of land for a school in the 1970s under the name of Jagir Singh Primary School and also for Simba Union in 1979. Mata Kishen Kaur Sidhu was the wife of Kishen Singh and she served as chairlady of Siri Guru Singh Sabha in the 1960s.

ISTRI SABHA

KISHEN KAUR SIDHU

The Istri Sabha (ladies committee) plays a very vital role through holding of regular weekly satsangs* and in the preparation of langar*. They also engage in charitable activities such as food distributions and donations of much needed items to several charitable organizations and schools. They further lend their support to the main committee in improving, managing, maintaining the upkeep of the Gurudwara and its facilities, and to each and every project undertaken. They provide an invaluable and dedicated service to the Gurudwara. To mention but a few of the dedicated Istri Sabha Sewadars from the past who include; Sardani Kishen Kaur Sidhu, Sardani Ajmer Kaur, Sardarni Gurbachan Kaur Sandhu, Sardani Ajit Kaur Bainwaitt, Sardarni Ajit Kaur Chatthe, Sardani Harbans Kaur Gundara, Sardani Swaran Kaur, Sardani Ravinder 'Binday' Kaur Gundara, Sardani Rajinder Kaur Brah, Sardani Jasminder Kaur Pandhal, Sardani Narinder Kaur Pandhal, Sardani Parminder Kaur Padhaal, Kanta Sethi.

Langar is a common kitchen where food is cooked and served in a Gurudwara to all visitors without distinction of background at no cost. Satsang involves listening to or reading the Sikh Scriptures, reflecting on, discussing and assimilating the meaning, meditating on the Source of these words, and bring their meaning into ones' daily lives.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sitting from left to right - Jaswinderjit Kaur Sehdeva; Manjeet Kaur Pandhal; Manjit Kaur Aujla; Jaspal Kaur Sandhu; Harpal Kaur Brah (Chairlady); Baljit Kaur Chatthe (Vice Chairlady); Prabjyot Kaur Pandhal. Sitting from right to left - Mandeep Kaur Rupra (Vice Secretary); Rajwant Kaur Khaira (Secretary); Rajwinder Kaur Sanghera (Vice Treasurer); Manvinder Kaur Aujla (Treasurer); Hardip Kaur Brar; Harrupinder Kaur Sidhu; Rani Kaur Brar. Standing from right to left - Gurbax Kaur Hayer; Kirandip Kaur Hayer; Gurmeet Kaur Brah; Rupinder Kaur Basuta; Kamalpreet Kaur Brar; Baljit Kaur Riyat; Rajinder Kaur Basuta. Extras - Rupinder Kaur Chatthe; Harjit Kaur Hayer; Gurmej Kaur Pandhal; Tarsem Kaur Basuta

GURMEJ KAUR PANDHAL & HARJIT KAUR HAYER

TARSEM KAUR BASUTA

RUPINDER KAUR CHATTHE

MEMORABLE EVENTS

1969: 500th Prakash Guru Nanak

With full cooperation of Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha Kisumu, this landmark occasion was celebrated with vigour and great enthusiasm. Besides a chain of Akhand Paths held alternatively at both Gurudwaras each weekend, the following activities were held: Distribution of sweets to the children of all Primary schools in Kisumu; A brochure on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji was produced; Exhibition on the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji; Fancy dress football match; Sports for Sikh children, gents and ladies of all ages; A party for children where they cut a cake and had a bit of Bhangra; A fireworks display was planned but had to be cancelled due to the sudden death of Hon. Tom Mboya; and Ragi Jatha of Bhai Lal Singh of Karnal performed Shabad Kirtan every evening

A lot of money was spent on these activities and it was equally shared by the two Sikh Sabhas of Kisumu. Many people were involved in their organisation but significant roles were played by Mr. Mohinder Singh Mand, Mr. S. S. Talib, Mr. Atma Singh, Mr. Gurmukh Singh Dhanjal and Mr. Aridaman Singh Thind. Besides holding the above activities, the Gurudwara started a charitable Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary which was open to the general public.

1988: th Sikh Youth Camp: Held at Tom Mboya College, Kisumu, it was a joint activity between both Gurudwaras Siri Guru Singh Sabha and Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha, Kisumu. It provided the youth with opportunity to learn about Sikhism, participate in sports activities, make new friends and learn from each other.

2001: Western Kenya Sports and Cultural Festival: It was a very successful Vaisakhi sports and cultural festival held in collaboration between the Sikh communities from Kisumu, Eldoret, Kitale, Kericho, Kakamega and Nakuru. The Kisumu Sikh community hosted the event that was held at the Kisumu Simba Club where a tree-planting ceremony was also held.

*2008: 300th Gurta Gaddi Divas Gurpurab. M*marking the 300th year of bestowing the Guruship to the Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. This was a big celebration and five Akhand Paths were held and Nagar Kirtan parade.

A SELFLESS JOURNEY INTO SERVICE

Born in Uganda in 1939, Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ji or Babaji as he is fondly referred to, was raised in Kenya. He attended school in Kisumu and was a regular at Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara. His father worked with the railways and the family moved from station to station.

Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab - the holiest shrine of the Sikhs where millions of visitors come to experience every single year from all over the world

Babaji emigrated to England in the 1960s and trained as a structural engineer. Deeply devoted to the teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he is the leader of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, an organisation devoted to Sikhism. Between 1995 and 1999, the organisation, under his leadership, reworked the external gold gilding of the Golden Temple or Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar.

"It was a complex procedure. The first gold gilding of Harmandir Sahib was done by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who consolidated the Sikh empire before he was overthrown by the British. It took him 27 years, from 1803 to 1820, to complete the job, finding time between the many battles he fought to consolidate the Sikh empire. We did it in four years." He explains the process. "We pasted 24 layers of gold leaf on copper

KISUMU
KIBOS
LUMBWA
KERICHO
NAKURU
GILGIL
NAIVASHA
NAIROBI
SULTAN HAMUD
MAKINDU
MTITO ANDEI
TSAVO
VOI
MOMBASA
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
02 FEB • ARRIVAL OF GURUJI, 1PM
• EVENING DIWAN, 7PM
03 FEB • ASA DI VAR, 5AM
• DEPARTURE OF GURUJI
TO NAKURU BY TRAIN, 11AM
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
31 JAN • ARAMBH AKHAND PAATH, 5AM
02 FEB • BHOG AKHAND PAATH, 5AM
• DEPARTURE OF GURUJI
FOR KISUMU BY ROAD, 10.00 AM
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
03 FEB • ARRIVAL OF GURUJI, 7PM
• DARSHAN, KIRTAN & LANGAR SEVA
BY SANGAT AT NAKURU STATION, 7PM
• DEPARTURE OF GURUJI
FOR NAIROBI, 10PM
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
04 FEB • ARRIVAL OF GURUJI, 6AM
• DARSHAN, KIRTAN & LANGAR SEVA
BY SANGAT AT NAIROBI STATION, 6AM
• DEPARTURE OF GURUJI
FOR MAKINDU, 9AM
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS
04 FEB • ARRIVAL OF GURUJI, 3PM
• WELCOME & PROCESSION TO
GURUDWARA SAHIB, 3-5PM
05 FEB • ARAMBH AKHAND PAATH, 5AM
07 FEB • BHOG AKHAND PAATH, 5AM
• ASA DI VAR, 6AM
• AMRIT SANCHAAR, 7AM
GURU'S DARBAR ON THE TRAIN
This special train, prepared for travel of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji,
is resplendent with Guru Darbar, Sangat, Kirtan, Simran and Langar, as it
journeys from Kisumu to Makindu. A defining moment in history,
as the original saroop of Guru Ji returns to its roots – Sikh Temple Makindu.
SIKH GURU'S
SACRED
HISTORIC
TRAVEL
KERICHO • KISUMU • NAKURU • NAIROBI • MAKINDU
31 JAN - 7 FEB 2010
PRAYER INVOKING
PEACE
PROSPERITY
& UNITY

Specially commissioned Sikh Guru Express train that retraced the historic tracks of the from Kisumu to Makindu

plates with mercury. It's almost pure. The gold leaf is made from gold bars cut into pieces of one square centimeter and manually pounded to 120 times per minute to the thickness of 0.76 microns or one thousandth of a millimeter." The original leaf coating had 12 layers and lasted almost 177 years. Babaji's intention in having 24 layers of gold leaf is that it will last twice as long — almost four centuries. "This technology in India goes back to about 600 years and the art is passed from generation to generation and jealously guarded. But we were determined to rework the Golden Temple because it had started to corrode because of the copper within. But some things had to be determined, like the thickness of the gold leaf, which until now nobody knew. "With my engineering background and being in Birmingham where the Industrial Revolution started, l managed to take an original gold plate to a research institute there. The officer had never seen a hand-beaten gold leaf."

Babaji is nostalgic about his Kenyan roots. Before inheriting the leadership from Baba Puran Singh from Kericho, the founder of Nishkam Sahib, he was told of the leader's desire to see the original Sri Granth Sahib in Kenya returned to Makindu Gurudwara. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib was taken from Makindu Gurudwara in 1972 after an accidental fire and few other mishaps to Siri Guru Singh Sabha Nairobi for safekeeping. At some point it was taken to Kericho Sikh Temple, where the organisation has built a new temple including a technical college for the youth of all creeds. "This is the only hand-illuminated copy of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib that l have ever seen," says Babaji, "and this particular copy may be a one of its kind in the world today." He describes the history of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib: "This version has 2,452 pages and the technique used was letters cut on marble fonts to stamp on the pages." But this technology was used in the 1920s. It seems then that perhaps the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not the original brought to Africa but nevertheless one of the first ones on the continent. The holy book is in the care of Mohinder Singh Ji and placed in Makindu Gurudwara rebuilt and opened in 2010 on its original site (which was opened in 1930) within the grounds. This copy of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib was returned retracing the journey on the line constructed by the Indian labour.

SIKH GURU EXPRESS

A historic journey was made when the original Sri Guru Granth Sahib believed to be the original one brought to Kenya in 1892 was returned to Makindu Sikh Temple where it had been in residence for many years. The five-day journey of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib aboard a train, the Sikh Guru Express — from Kericho to Kisumu by road, and from Kisumu (where an Akhand Patth was organized and a special procession carried the Guru Granth Sahib from Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara to the Kisumu Railway) stopping at Nakuru and Nairobi for prayers for Kenya's peace, prosperity and unity — was dubbed the "Sacred Travel for Peace, Prosperity and Unity." "Today, l am talking to 3rd and 4th generation Kenyans who are the great grandchildren of the builders. You have to be proud of your forefathers," Raila Odinga, the Kenyan Prime Minister at the time came to pay homage to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib being recited aboard the Sikh Guru Express at the Nairobi Railway Station. The Sikh Guru Express was ornately draped with the Sikh colours of blue and yellow and the Sikh emblem, the Khanda, painted on the wagons.

Sikh Guru Express - the specially commissioned peace train in which Sikhs prayed for thecontinued peace, prosperity, unity and general wellbeing of our leaders and peoples of Kenya

TRAVEL
PEACE

SIKH GURUS
SACRED
HISTORIC
TRAVEL
PEACE
PROSPERITY
& UNITY

SCHOOLS

In June 1913, a night school was approved by Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu committee to teach English and Gurmukhi to Sikhs. It was called the Khalsa Night School.

The Siri Guru Singh Sabha Primary School as it stands today

The list of rules articulated that the Siri Guru Singh Sabha was in charge of the project. Classes in English language and Gurmukhi would be taught from Monday to Friday tentatively from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. There would be classes on Sunday too with the only exception on jodh mela (special occasions) and other festivities. The Gurmukhi classes were free. Students were charged for the English classes at Rs 1 per month for one class and Rs 2 for the other class. Funds were needed to purchase a table, two stools, two lanterns and oil to light the lanterns. Students were to pay the fees by the 5th of each month or pay in installments of half the amount every two weeks. Waryam Singh volunteered to teach English and Nihal Singh volunteered to teach Gurmukhi. The Nyanza Sikhs interest in education can be seen from the various minutes recorded over the early decades. In the 1920s, the Khalsa Girls Primary School was opened by the Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. It was the first of its kind in Kisumu. In 1932, the Kisumu Khalsa Conference took place during the 1932 school holidays. The same year, there's mention of the Kenya School with Harnam Singh's wife as the headmistress. In 1933, the Sikh Girls School was opened on the adjoining plot to the Gurudwara. It was renamed Siri Guru Singh Sabha Girls' School (SGSS) sometime in the 1960s. In 1936 the education of Sikh settlers' daughters was discussed and concern over the low

First Headteacher Kuldip Kaur Hayer, SGSS Nursery School

Siri Guru Singh Sabha Nursery School and Class

number of Sikh girls enrolled. In 1938, the Inder Singh Kala Singh (2nd chairman of SGSS Kisumu 1922 to 1923) was the first purpose built primary school in Kenya. It was built in Miwani. Inder Singh was the son of Kala Singh. The same year, the Kibos Indian School was opened but by the 1946 it was run-down with no one wanting to teach there. It was finally closed. The minutes of 27th January 1946 record that a school bus was needed for the Kibos children to come to school in Kisumu amidst concerns that the Kibos children are 'roaming around like wild animals'. Ksh 15,000 was needed for the bus and it was bought soon after. The rules of 1943 encouraged the girls to recite the morning prayers, Asa ji di Var at the Gurudwara before school started. In 1958, there was a plan to build a new building for Siri Guru Singh Sabha Girls' School on a new plot. In the 1970s, to appreciate the academic success of the Sikh children for obtaining good results in the Certificate for Primary Education (CPE), Form 4 and A-levels National exams, children were awarded prizes. Singh Sabha Nursery School was built in the 1980's. The foundation stone was laid in on 1 January 1982 by Sardarni Harbans Kaur Behan. The school was opened on 2nd January 1983 by Sardarni Sucham (also known as Resham) Kaur Hayer the wife of the late Mr. Bishan Singh Hayer. The Nursery School began on 10th January 1983 and the first head teacher of the school was called Kuldip Kaur Hayer. In 2011, the Ring road property purchased for the proposed Guru Nanak academy.

GURU NANAK HARAMBEE DISPENSARY

The dispensary housed in the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Harambee Dispensary building stands directly opposite the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara. It was bought in 1969 from a Kisumu based medical practitioner and a prominent doctor, Dr. Fakir Chand Sood. It was called Anand Bhavan (happy home). According to local sources, there was rivalry in the Sood clan and the owner was not willing to sell the building to the doctor. In 1935, Jagat Singh Pandhal bought the building on pretext that it was for himself but sold it to the doctor. The building also houses the residential facilities of the clinic doctor. The current doctor is Dr. Arun Setty, who says, 'I have been working here since 2007 and the local community has immensly benefited from the dispensary services as it is affortable to one and all.'

In 1991, the dispensary was upgraded for its members. In 2012, a haemo-control machine was purchased to analyse blood. The machine is designed to deliver quick and accurate results to aid the diagnosis of anemia, diabetes and associated conditions. A medical scheme is being discussed to provide affordable and quality treatment to its members.

Lou Minister Omollo Okero inaugurating the opening of the Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary in Kisumu, 1969

Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary in Kisumu, 1969

Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary in Kisumu, 2014

DR. ARUN SETTY

SIMBA CLUB

Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu, was one of the first religious institutions to build a tennis court in Kisumu under the name of the Sikh Union Kisumu.

Opening of the Tennis Court by Mistry Isher Singh of Elburgen on 11 January 1948

At the same time, two other games; Volley Ball & Hockey were promoted. This facility was provided on the grounds opposite Siri Guru Singh-Sabha Kisumu, across the road where the present day Bharam Samaj is located.

After many years, Sikh Union was granted the present plot along Kisumu-Kakamega Highway where the present club house is located with all the sporting facilities. A brief account of the present day establishment, which is now known as Kisumu Simba Club, is a pleasant realisation of the community's aspirations through their hard work and limited efforts. With steady efforts over the years, what started with a tennis court only for a few years came to life at a crawling pace. A few hockey enthusiasts amongst them Surinder Singh Mangat, Harbans Singh Sandhu and others started promoting hockey. A donor was found in Kalvant Singh Deogan from Eldoret, who donated a small wooden shed structure that was erected with the aim of starting some activity to make the place lively. Table tennis was introduced. Water

Sardar Isher Singh came to Kenya in 1906 and worked with the Uganda Railway for a few years. His next job was with the Mau Forest Ltd up to 1913 moving to Molo Timber Company till 1931. He then went into business, starting a maize milling and a saw mill in Elburgon, supplying wood fuel to the railways for the steam engines and later farming in Kibos and Kibigori. In 1944, he opened an engineering workshop in Kisumu. He died in 1982 at the age of 100.

Guru Nanak Hockey Tournament, 1970

and electrical supplies were installed as well. Private dinner (social) meetings of some keen supporters became a regular feature. Over a short time, the public started showing interest in the sumptuous preparation and soon this became a very popular event. This helped to raise some small funds for further improvements with a little more effort a temporary shed was built with a cemented floor to accommodate for bigger attendance. Apart from private regular dinner meetings, it became a popular outlet for people. Permanent abolition block was built and the concrete boundary wall was erected.

An adjoining club house originally known as Gymkhana Club, was also taken over by the Simba Club with a view to cater for more playing ground and a gym. Siri Guru Singh Sabha and Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha, Kisumu were approached to provide financial support for the purchase of this club house. They consented to a handsome contribution in equal measure. A very recent addition has been a borehole to supplement the water supply which is a permanent problem in town. Residents of the town frequent this place on Fridays. It was decided to declare Friday curry meetings and family days where people started coming in large numbers with their family members.

Members at the Simba Club in the early years

Meanwhile, more and more people were requesting to join in as members. For the first time, a formal working committee was formed and plans were made to raise money for a permanent club house. The plan was approved and the project was supported by among others, Sembi family Kakamega, Panesar and Rehal brothers, Bhamra brothers, Gabri and Sandu brothers, Hari Agarwal, Joginder Singh Behan. Funds were raised locally and across the Nyanza, Western Provinces, Rai family also supported while Mr. Harbajan Singh Sembi of Kisumu, popularly known as Ndugu was another big donor. The building of the foundation commenced and Rehal Construction Company provided free labour up to the floor level with the necessary filling. Thereafter, the contract for construction of club house was awarded to Jagjeet Joinery Works ltd. All the timber for roofing, stage, windows & door frames were donated by Harbajan

Singh Sembi of Kakamega including the two steel doors of the entrances in front and rear. With Mr. Sharmas effort, a donor was later found for a permanent kitchen which was founded by the pioneer businessman Raishi.

Soon, a plan for a Squash Court was drawn, which was kindly built by the Panesar Building Company in memory of their late father Uttam Singh Panesar. A steady progress was made over the years in the improvement and development of the hockey field sheds and the beautification of the inner yard through a tremendous effort by the late Gurbux Singh Hayer. On the sport side, Simba Union Kisumu has been on the forefront in the sport of hockey. This game has flourished prominently in Kisumu on account of Simba Club and its sponsorship. Despite financial constraints, the Simba Hockey Team has always been sponsored to play the Kenya league matches in the country. It has several good and experienced players coached by coaches namely: Baldev Singh Gataura, Bir Singh Gataura, Aridhaman Singh Thind and Parminder Singh Saini (Kake), who has been a top Kenyan hockey player having represented Kenya team in three Olympics. In 1970 the Guru Nanak Hockey Tournament was played here in which the Sikh Union teams from Nairobi, Kampala, Nakuru and Kisumu participated. They have been winners of Kenya National League three times they were active participants in M.R. D'Souza Cup and Kenya Cup. The team played all Karam Singh Hira Singh Cup, Kisher Singh Cup, Sagoo Brothers Trophy & Munde Cup. Parminder has coached many young Kenyans who are notable hockey players produced by Simba Club, which include late Gurveer Singh Padhaal, late Satpal Singh Sirha, Simi Goyal, Amit Goyal, Satinder Singh Brah, Jaspal Singh Bhamra and our Kenya Team players, the late Lucas Alubaha, Emmanuel Oduol, Peter Akasa, Meshack Senge, late Michael Omondi, Brian Oduda, Clement Omanyi, Samson Oriso, Roy Odhier, Charles Oguk and Mary Ohar. Kamal Sembi is the current coach of Simba Club players and a Hockey enthusiast.

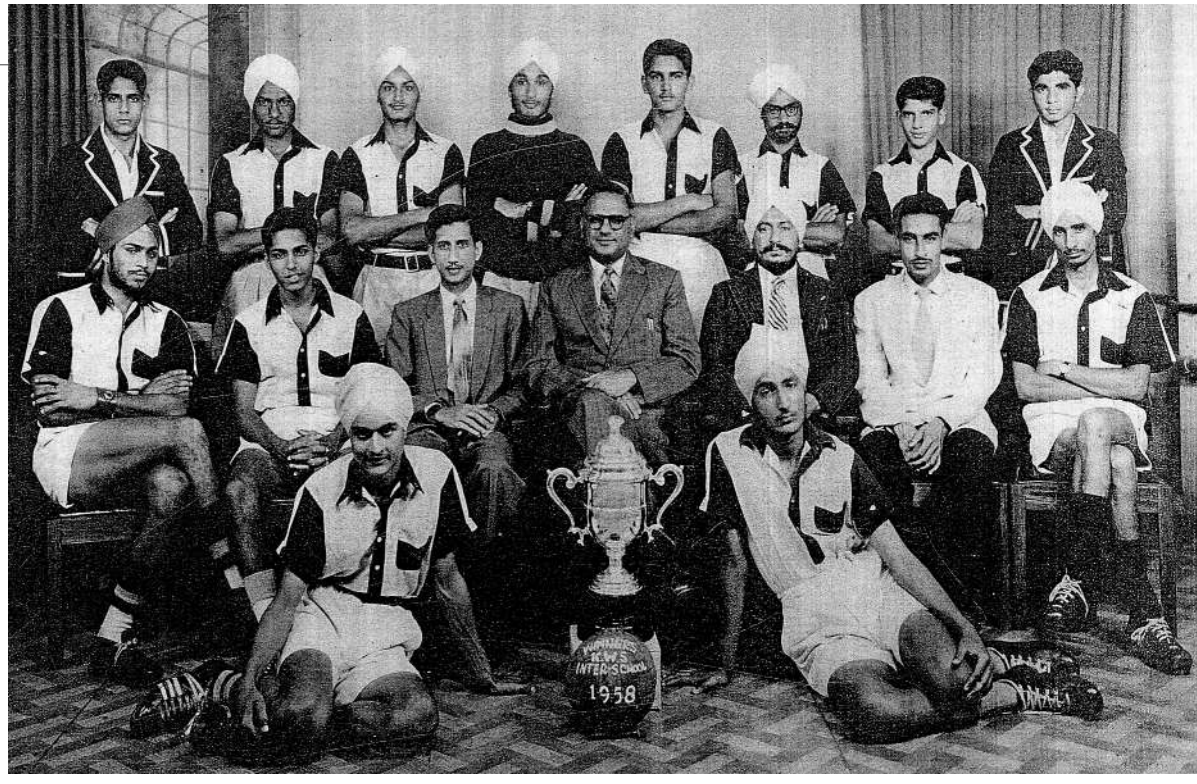
Simba Club as it stands today

SPORTSMEN

PARMINDER SINGH SAINI

Vice-chairman of the Kenya Hockey Union

Born in Miwani in 1957, Parminder popularly known as Kake started playing hockey at the Kibos Club established by the Sikhs in the 1970s. He trained under Mr. Aridhaman Singh Thind, the headmaster of Kisumu Boys High School who made a significant contribution to sports especially hockey in the country. “I played for Africa against Asia in six test matches in 1989,” Kake lists some of his memorable matches. “I have played in many countries with Kenya National Hockey. Kisumu Simba Club has been instrumental in sports development in Nyanza Province and the hockey team is still top of the league, producing many fine players in the country. “However, hockey is an expensive sport. The current game is played on Astro turf which is expensive. The only one we have in Kenya is in Nairobi. Nevertheless, even though our team practices on a murram pitch, it still produces the finest hockey players in Kenya.” ournaments played are Africa Club Cup (1999 - Harare; 2001 – Nairobi; 2003 – South Africa); 1984 – Olympics Games in Los Angeles; 1985 – Intercontinental Club, Spain; 1988 – South Korea; 1991 - Five Continents Tournament – Malaysia; Six times - Indra Gandhi Memorial Tournament; 1999 – Manager Kenya Hockey team for the All Africa Games in South Africa.



Kisumu High School wins the 1958 Inter-School Hockey Cup in 1958

1984 Kenya Olympics Team in Los Angeles, USA

EAST AFRICAN SAFARI RALLY

In 1970, Harjit Singh Pandhal, Surinder Singh Mangat and Manmohan Singh Saini completed the East African Rally. In 1971, the trio won the first Guru Nanak Rally in Jinja. Siri Guru Singh Sabha in Kisumu honoured them and several other Sikh rally drivers including the world-famous Flying Sikh Joginder Singh Bhachu with Gold Khandas.

Kenya's 'Flying Sikh' Joginder Singh put the country and the Kalasingha on the rallying world map

The Safari Rally Spirit has been rekindled by the younger Sikh generation. Many Sikh youths from Sikh Community of Kenya actively participate in Safari rallies. From Kisumu we are proud of the achievements of Jassi Chatthe and Gugu Panesar of 'KIBOS TEAM'. The idea of having a team developed started when Jassi Chatthe, son of S. Satwant Singh Chatthe, went spectating at the Nyanza Rally 2011. As a rally fan for many years and also having participated in the Nyanza Rally 1997 and 1998 in 'Chak-ji' the household rally car in the Kenyan Sikh fraternity, Jassi felt he could drive at a fast pace and give the front runners good competition. The desire came true when after a lot of convincing the Chatthe family agreed to fulfill Jassi's dreams-they purchased for him the winning car, a Mitsubishi Evo 9 of Kenya National Rally Championship (KNRC) Champion Lee Rose with a good backup of spares and accessories. Team Kibos began its journey into the Kenyan rallying with the first event Guru Nanak Rally 2011. With Kisumu's Gugu Panesar son of Late Paramjit Singh Panesar (fondly known as Gandhi) in the 'Hot seat', the pair of Sikh friends raised eyebrows when they set impressive stage times in the first two stages of their debut rally.

”Who are these guys at the back of the pack,” exclaimed one of the top KNRC Drivers. The crew pushed on to finish their first rally despite three punctures. The event set the ball rolling and a lot of technical learning was required to ensure the team's success.

In the 2012 KNRC season Jassi and Gugu drove well finishing within the top 10 of each rally and clinched the Division 3 championship title. At the Kenya Motor Sports Federation (KMSF) National Awards, Jassi was presented with the 'Most Improved Driver 2012' and Gugu was presented with the 'Most Improved Navigator 2012'. For Team Kibos a perfect end to a first season. The 2013 was another eventful year for the team. They held a couple of top 5 positions and two podium positions, 2nd place in the KNRC Kisumu rally and 3rd place in the KNRC Mombasa rally, which was an icing on the cake with the Division 2 championship title also won by Jassi and Gugu. The crew also won the Equator Clubman’s Rally championship organised by the Equator Motor Club. The team also travelled far and wide securing a 2nd position in the Arusha Guru Nanak Rally and retiring with mechanical grimlins in the Africa Rally Championship Tanzania and Uganda rallies. A new Mitsubishi Evo X awaits the team and crew as they plan the 2014 KNRC and Africa Rally Championship 2014. The team;s efforts to travel all around the African Continent exemplifies passion and commitment to sport in general.

Team Kibos also has a strong hold on the Autocross circuit and the Go-Karting events. Dilraj Chatthe won two events of Autocross championship in the works developed RAGE buggy. Also a strong contender in the Go-kart racing, Dilraj has won various events. The team is also represented by Manraj Saini and Jassi's sons Hamraj and Danveer in the junior category who have shown exceptional skill in motorsports at this young age! We wish Team Kibos 'Simply Sweet' success in motorsports and on their achievements.

FARMING

By 1901, the railway line arrived in Muhoroni. Thirty-five miles of the Kavirondo plains lay between Muhoroni and the final destination, the lake (Victoria). The area was marsh and Preston (the chief engineer) called the men to work fast in order to cross the malarious semi-swamp.

8 : DAILY NATION, Thursday, July 30, 1970

MAMBO

RIGHT MEN, GET READY TO FLEX YOUR MUSCLES

ORGANISERS of this year's "new look" Nairobi Show are giving top emphasis to spectator appeal in organising an equally "new look" programme of arena events.

One of the exciting new additions to the arena programme for the 1970 Show will be the finals of a nation-wide tug-of-war contest which promises rousing entertainment for both competitors and crowd.

The team surviving the four-day knock-out competition will win a handsome trophy donated by EA Breweries, the event's sponsors. And being thirsty work, of course, there will be ample quantities of good local beer to cheer up the losers.

Nairobi City Council, EA Power and Lighting and the EA Railways Corporation are among the first to throw down the challenge. A strong reply is expected to come in from the Provinces.

Both the heats and the finals will be run under Amateur Athletic Association rules, and referees will be provided by the Kenya Army.

Army referees will travel to Provincial centres for some of the heats to decide the best eight teams to compete at the Nairobi Show.

Flex those muscles, men, and get into training. . . .

GURDIAL SINGH pictured in the garden of his home on the outskirts of Kisumu.

Abracadabra, the 'wizard' is coming...

THREE weeks of wizardry are in store for diners at the New Stanley Grill, Nairobi, as from August 4 when Paul Potassy will be entertaining. He is known as "the fabulous entertainer" and "the sharpest act in town."

Paul Potassy is an internationally renowned entertainer who has thrilled people with his wizardry at the top night spots of the world.

His professional career as an entertainer started 29 years ago when he was a prisoner of war, although he had been an amateur "wizard" since the age of 13.

"Not so much a magician as an entertainer," is the way Hungarian-born Potassy prefers to describe himself. His object is to amuse people rather than fool them.

Puzzled spectators, sitting only at arm's length from this entertainer, marvel at his sleight-of-hand techniques, and are never able to discover "how he does it."

PHILIPS

This Week's Winners

Contest No. 2

MEET THE HAPPY MZEE WHO IS A FRIEND TO ALL

GURDIAL SINGH, a 63-year-old farmer who lives on the outskirts of Kisumu is the right chap to label "a man of the people". He is known to the local communities as Mzee "Mor-Dhialo", which I reckon to mean sort of "happy-go-lucky". A resident of Kibos, some three miles [illegible] of Kisumu township, Gurdial is a member of

A LEADING FAMILY OF PIONEERING KENYA SIKHS

ONE of the real pioneers of Kenya, Sardar Jagat Singh known far and wide as "macho ndogo" (small eyes) came to East Africa in 1895 when the railway line had hardly reached Changamwe, a few miles from Mombasa.

He was employed as a head clerk in the railway survey department up to 1901 when the Railway head reached Kisumu. For a time he worked as "time-keeper" in the established Marine Department.

The following year, he was allotted 105 acres of virgin land at Kibos as an experiment for the agricultural purposes. He was also permitted to recruit Indians from India to come to Kenya to take up agriculture. He brought twenty such persons with him and arranged for their accommondation, food and other requirements till they were able to stand on their own feet. They were given small pieces of land under his personal guarantee.

In those days land was cultivated with "jembes" (hoes) with the help of African workers. The output was naturally small. Even so, the pioneer agriculturalists who had opened up new land were fairly successful and the agricultural department at Lumbwa offered them oxen, yokes and ploughs for purposes of better cultivation.

The farmers however passed through long periods of very hard times. They suffered heavy losses. During the First World War all their employees were recruited by the Government.

Normal conditions returned after 1918. Sardar Jagat Singh was allotted water-rights and he installed a big flour mill on the river running through his land. At that time, a Mr. Maxwell arranged for the import of sugar cane seeds from Australia. Sardar Jagat Singh was the first Indian to buy seeds from him and began to grow beautiful crops of sugar cane. He started making "jagri" or Sukari gur" in 1930.

He suffered a severe domestic tragedy when in 1942 his son Parduman Singh with his wife and family died in an accident between Kakamega and Kisumu.

Sardar Jagat Singh died in 1957 leaving his elder son Gurdial Singh to carry on with the farm and other work.

After the independence of Kenya, Mr. Gurdial Singh was elected as councillor from Muhoroni division. He was appointed member of the Land Control Board and of the Board of Governors of the Secondary School in Kisumu District.

Mr. Gurdial Singh's son, Lakhmir Singh is in England. The others, Harbhajan Singh, Amarjit Singh, Hajit Singh and Narinder Pal Singh are operating a large scale transport business at Muhoroni in addition to two farms in Kibos and Chemelil.

MR. JAGAT SINGH

Mr. Hajit Singh entered the East African Safari in 1970 for the first time and succeeded in completing the course. For this he received the hearty congratulations of the local Sikhs.

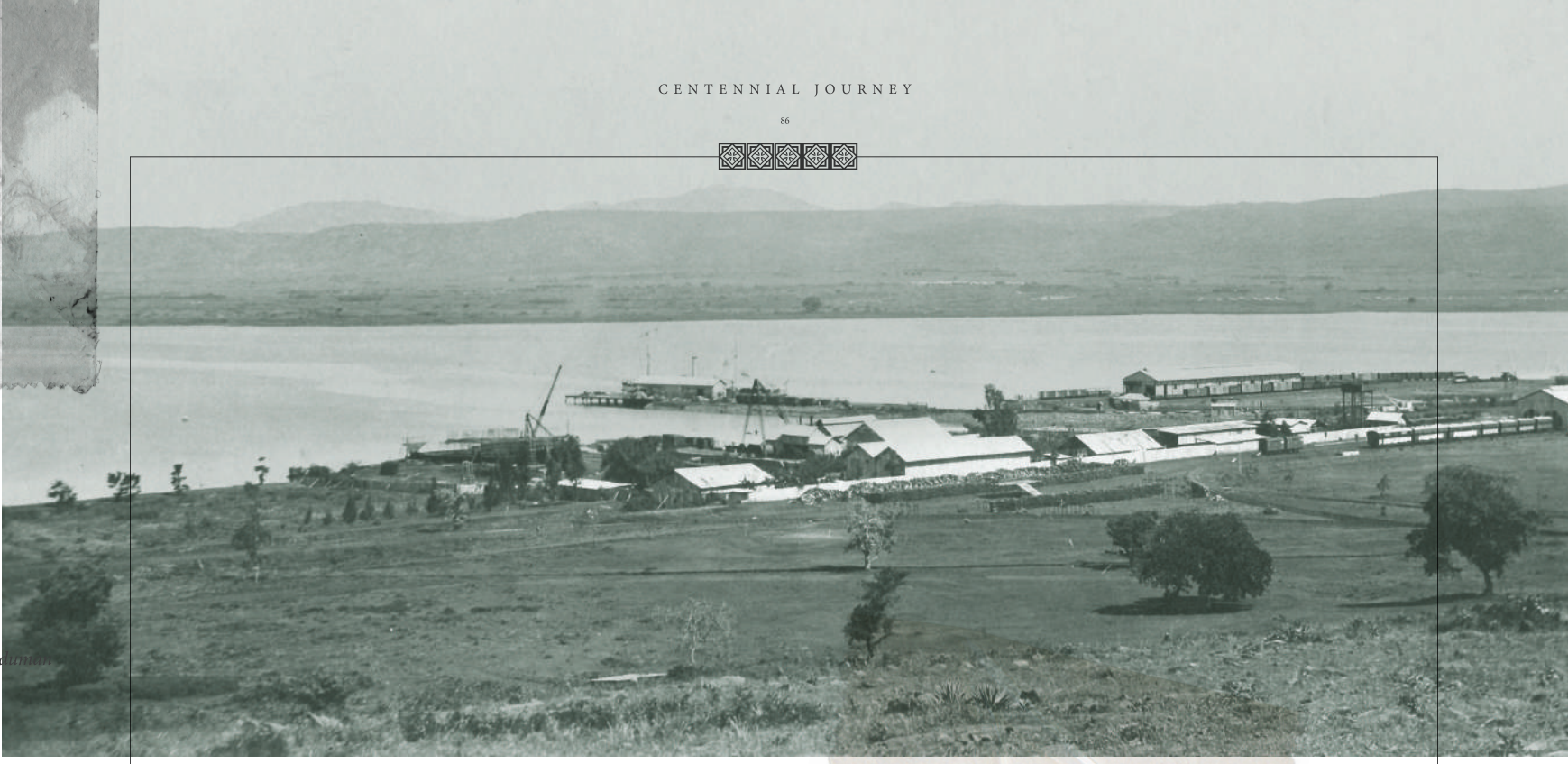
Sardar Jagat Singh's successors are true and loyal Kenyans in every respect.

Harjeet Singh

Amarjeet Singh

Harjit Singh is one of Mr. Jagat Singh's grandsons. He completed the E.A. Safari in 1970.

Mr. Gurdial Singh is one of Mr. Jagat Singh's sons, and a leading personality in Kenya's Nyanza Province.



A view of Kisumu in 1913

PHOTO COURTESY AND COPYRIGHT OF KENYA NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KENYA

The line reached Kibos village, six miles from the lake. However, half the workforce including Preston became ill with malaria and dysentery. The rains fell so hard that the entire place turned into a marsh. The new embankments were either washed out or were barely able to support the trains that wobbled dangerously waiting for a disaster to happen.' (Ref pg 67 Victoria's Tin Dragon)

This is one of the earliest descriptions of Kibos – a malarious, semi-swamp that during the rains it was filled with water. At that time, the Nandi on the hills attacked the camps resisting the 'iron-snake' from traversing through the land.

A year later in 1902, Jagat Singh Pandhal was allocated 105 acres of virgin land in Kibos as an experiment for agricultural purposes by the colonial administration and permitted to recruit Indians from India. Jagat Singh was an educated man, according to his grandsons. He was fluent in English, the Indian vernaculars and in time Kiswahili and Dholuo. Jagat Singh brought 20 such persons from his village in Punjab. They were given small plots to start a farming industry. In those days men worked with jembes and hoes employing the local Luo as field hands.

Sardar Jagat Singh arrived in East Africa in 1895 when the railway line reached Changamwe, a few kilometers inland from Mombasa. Employed as a head clerk in the railway survey department up to 1901 when the Uganda Railway reached Kisumu (Port Florence as it was named then), he worked as a 'time-keeper' in the established Marine Department. Jagat Singh was a short tough jat from a farming family in the Jullundher District and his small beady eyes earned him the nickname 'Macho Dogo'. His knowledge of land and grit was a sure-fire recipe for success. In time he was succeeded by his sons Gurdial Singh and Parduman Singh.

They passed through hard times with heavy losses. During the First World War, the government seized all the oxen and the carts for a puny compensation and

**In 1903, the Protectorate established a settlement of Indian farmers at Kibos' (Satya V Sood Victoria's Tin Dragon). D.D. Waller, the Acting Paymaster of the King's African Rifles in the Treasury was instrumental in this. About 1,500 acres of a low-lying area of the Nyanza basin in the vicinity of the Kibos River about six miles from Kisumu was allocated.*

what survived were returned well after the hostilities were over.' The recollections below are by Harjit Singh Pandhal and Sukhdev Singh Mangat grandsons of Jagat Singh Pandhal based on the conversations with their grandfather. They continue with his sugar cane legacy. "The British asked me to work for them when we arrived in Kisumu. But the work they offered was manual using a hammer and chisel. I refused. They said 'if you can't do the job, go back to India. "I told them that l was a farmer. The British then decided to give me land. They gave me a tent and two escorts (askaris) and l started my life in Kibos by the Kibos River," Jagat Singh Pandhal as told to Harjit. In 1904, my grandfather returned to India to marry. He returned with my grandmother and in 1908 his first son, Gurdial Singh was born. My grandmother had another son, Parduman Singh who was my father and four daughters.

In 1918, Jagat Singh was allotted water-rights and he became the first to install a flour mill on the river running through his land. At that time, a Mr. Maxwell arranged for the import of sugar cane seeds from Australia. Jagat Singh was the first Indian to buy the sugar cane seeds from him to plant. Sometime in the 1920s, he started making jaggery (sukari) from the sugar cane.

He took the jaggery to Kisumu on an ox-cart but nobody bought it because it was covered with flies. He returned home with it and stored it in the drums. A few weeks later the jaggery fermented and that's how my grandfather started brewing changaa (a local brew), recalls Harjit Singh with humour. It turned out to be a successful business because until then all the changaa was distilled from maize or as the Nubians did with bananas. agat Singh was an astute businessman. He saw the need for transporting goods between towns and started an ox-cart transport business ferrying goods like salt, floor and other ration from Kibos to Mumias.

Gurdial Singh and Parduman Singh

According to Harjit, Maxwell put up Miwani Sugar Factory in 1922. It was a second-hand mill from Australia. The first seeds planted were Odiaga (there's an Odiaga prison in the area on the Busia road). fter that many different types of seeds have been planted with better yields, some which are drought-resistant like 617. The sugar cane belt has expanded in western Kenya to cover areas like Homa Bay, Mumias, Kitale and Migori. It is entirely dependent on rain and takes 18 months to mature. Sukhdev Singh Mangat, now in his early 80s, remembers things differently.

For a while my grandfather worked in the Marine Department building ships. In those days the ships came in parts from England which were clearly numbered so that they could be assembled at the port. There was no welding and the parts were fitted together using a method called 'hot riveting'. After he was allocated land in Kibos, he brought in others from his village in the Punjab and his two younger brothers, Surain Singh and Sawan Singh. His older brother Bhagat Singh remained in Punjab.

They started with planting lentils, rubber from Malaysia and sisal which was in big demand but in 1922, Jagat Singh planted sugar cane on his farms in Kibos and Ngata pioneering sugar cane farming in the area when the Victoria Nyanza Sugar Factory was built in Miwani by Mr. Sharp and Andreas from Queensland, Australia and Mr. Brussler from South Africa. They invested in 10,000 acres to plant the cane. According to Sukhdev Singh, Maxwell was a close friend of Jagat Singh but he never planted sugar cane. He had land at Odiaga which is now the site of Odiaga Prison near the Nyanza Golf Club.

Jagat Singh was very successful. In 1925 he bought a brand new T-Model Ford and took it to India. Whilst in India, he built the first palatial brick house in his village, Null. He had a well dug and fitted with a diesel engine and a six-inch centrifugal pump to irrigate his farms. He returned to Kenya in 1929.

"The trolley line from Miwani used to stop at his Kibos farm to collect the sugar cane. In those days ox-carts were used to plough the fields. They were fitted with ploughs made in England. The brand name was Conqueror and they were sold by a firm called Gailey and Roberts.

"Work started at 4 a.m. My grandfather had about 200 Zebu oxen. The oxen were changed at 7 a.m. The farmers bought the oxen from Ahero and Sondu at Ksh 9 per head. The British took them away for use during the 2nd World War. Zebu cattle in Kenya are

Painting of a Sikh and his farming fields in Punjab, and much what it also looked like in the early years of Sikh farms in Kibos

believed to have been introduced into Africa from Asia. "By the 1940s, there were 34 families farming in Kibos and six in Miwani. Most were Sikh and a few Muslims and Hindus. The mechanized machinery came in after the 1940s. We had Caterpillar tractors, American Lorries and cars. Miwani was the backbone of the sugar industry, encouraging farmers to plant more.

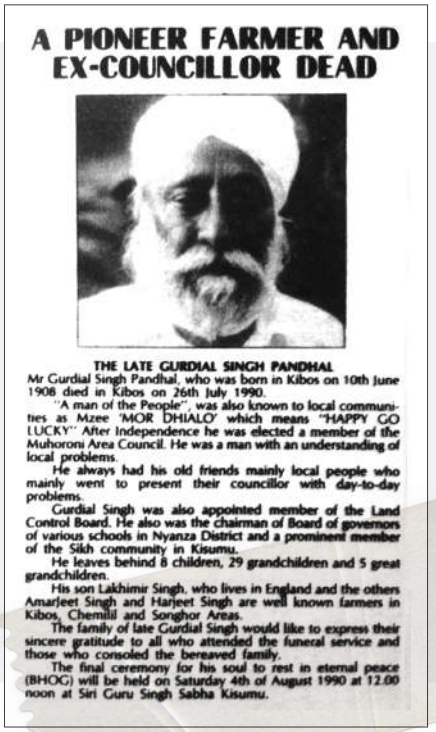
"However, the prices were not compatible. The factory offered Ksh 2.50 per ton of cane. The farmers got a better return on their investment by crushing their own cane to make jaggery – Kshs. 7 per 36 pounds.

"In 1936, the government banned the production of jaggery because it was mostly used for brewing illicit liquor like the local brew, changaa. The farmers were given a one year grace period. In 1946, the Hindocha family from Jinja bought Miwani factory and the land for 54 lakhs. It operated successfully for many years until 1986 when it was abandoned.

"The government never supported the sugar cane industry until the 1970s when the demand for sugar cane rose," states the veteran farmer. In 1948, the Campator seed was introduced from Chennai followed by different strains like CO 331, CO 419, CO 420 and CO 470.

Today the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI) supplies the seed which matures and yields good sucrose. Currently, there are four sugar factories in the Nyanza area – Miwani (1922) now closed Muhoroni (1968) and Chemelil (1969) which are parastatal bodies. The Kenya Sugar and Allied Industries Limited (KSAIL) built by Sardar Channan Singh Chatthe and his sons opened in 2006. It is the only private mill in the area.

"My late father, Sardar Santa Singh was brought to Kenya by his uncle, Sardar Jagat Singh Pandhal in 1918," states Channan Singh, an elder in the community today.



A PIONEER FARMER AND EX-COUNCILLOR DEAD

THE LATE GURDIAL SINGH PANDHAL

Mr Gurdial Singh Pandhal, who was born in Kibos on 10th June 1908 died in Kibos on 26th July 1990.

"A man of the People", was also known to local communities as Mzee 'MOR DHIALO' which means "HAPPY GO LUCKY" After Independence he was elected a member of the Muhoroni Area Council. He was a man with an understanding of local problems.

He always had his old friends mainly local people who mainly went to present their councillor with day-to-day problems.

Gurdial Singh was also appointed member of the Land Control Board. He also was the chairman of Board of governors of various schools in Nyanza District and a prominent member of the Sikh community in Kisumu.

He leaves behind 8 children, 29 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

His son Lakhimir Singh, who lives in England and the others Amarjeet Singh and Harjeet Singh are well known farmers in Kibos, Chemilil and Songhor Areas.

The family of late Gurdial Singh would like to express their sincere gratitude to all who attended the funeral service and those who consoled the bereaved family.

The final ceremony for his soul to rest in eternal peace (BHOG) will be held on Saturday 4th of August 1990 at 12.00 noon at Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu.

Jagat Singh passed away in 1957. Tragedy robbed him of one son – Parduman Singh, his wife and one son in 1942. His son, Gurdial Singh took over the work of his father, was elected Councillor of Muhoroni division, appointed Member of the Land Control Board and of the Board of Governors of the Secondary school in Kisumu District. He passed away on 26th June, 1990. His son Amarjit Singh continues farming in Kibos and Harjit Singh son of Parduman Singh in Chemelil.

ENGINEERING

By Avtar Singh Bhamra

The Sikh proclamation 'Jo Bole So Nihal' was a tonic of strength and determination for the early Sikhs in Africa. Our pioneers' used their skills to create some of the best workshops in Kisumu.

Arjan Singh Virdi, Jiwan Singh Nagi & Harbhajan Singh Nagi

As the population increased in the railway's landhies where most Sikh families lived by virtue of being employed by the railway and marine department, people brought their families from India and started diverting to trades more related to their original skills from India.

The engineers drifted towards engineering, farmers towards farming, constructors towards construction and the dukawallas started their shops.

The engineering industry gained prominence in Kisumu when a white man (Mzungu) by the name Onslow opened an engineering workshop called Onslow Ltd in the early 1900s. It was where Cooper Motors Corporation Ltd is today. Onslow's workshop catered for all kinds of engineering requirements. He had a massive foundry workshop and all the required engineering machines. His clientele included the Railways and the port.

Onslow offered the Sikhs work because they were skilled. The oldest Sikh, a mistry working for Onslow was Sardar Jiwan Singh. He was enterprising and after a few years, he opened his own business in the name of Nyanza Engineering Works. He started training young artisans and even employed engineers from Onslow, offering them better salaries. It gave others confidence to do the same and many small engineering workshops sprung up. The pioneers of the engineering industry in Kisumu were Amar Singh Dhanjal, Amar Singh Gabri, Arjan Singh Virdee, Baja Singh Bhamra, Balwant Singh Ramghotra,

Charan Singh Bhamra, Dhanwant Singh, Isher Singh Bhullar, Jiwan Singh Nagi, Karam Singh Bachu, Kartar Singh Sagoo, Laxman Singh Sokhi, Mangal Singh Ruprah, Mohinder Singh Sembi, Mool Singh Sandhu, Sohan Singh Ruprah, Uttam Singh Bhui and Wattan Singh Ruprah. Siri Guru Singh Sabha was the only Gurudwara we had in Kisumu (In 1954, the Ramgharia Sikh Temple was opened in Industrial area). There was a lot of togetherness. It was the only venue where we all got together as a community. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu Gurudwara a hundred years is the result of our pioneers who gave us this meticulous place to worship in the middle of the city. Without their bold efforts, the construction would not have been easy to accomplish. May Waheguru always remind us of their undiluted contributions and our children emulate from their teachings. As a member of the Ramgharia Sikh Temple, the centenary of Siri Guru Singh Sabha is an occasion to bring the Sikh community closer and for all to celebrate. Avtar Singh Bhamra born in 1940 in Kisumu is the son of Charan Singh, a pioneering engineer. His late father, Charan Singh was from Amritsar and employed in the railway workshop as an engineer. He arrived in Kisumu in 1937 and continued to work for 16 years in the railway workshop. He then opened a small engineering workshop which has expanded into Sterling Enterprises Ltd and Check-In Motors Ltd. The business is today run by his sons and grandsons.

Sohan Singh Rupra, Laxman Singh Sokhi, Uttam Singh Bhui, Wattan Singh Rupra & Amar Singh Gabri

MEMORIES OF MY MOTHER

By Mrs Malveer Kaur Chahil

My mother, Ajmer Kaur Bhandal, came from India to Kisumu in the 1940's. We had a farm in Chemelil, which is 50 kilometers from Kisumu. The roads in those days were bad with no tarmac, just murram which during the rains were impassable.

In the 1950s, my mother moved to Kisumu so that her children (that is my siblings and I) could attend school. There was no transport like buses in those days from Chemelil to Kisumu. I attended Sikh Girls School in the 1950s and 1960s. The name was changed to Siri Guru Singh Sabha Girls School, after Kenya's independence in December 1963.

For my mother being in a new town, the Gurudwara became a second home where she could do 'sewa' in the house of God and be with the rest of the community. She devotedly attended the ladies satsang every Fridays. The highlight of the week for many of my mother's generation was the Friday afternoon Sat Sang. The women began by reading the Sukhmani Sahib path (Sukhmani Sahib is the name given to the set of hymns divided into 24 sections which appear in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scriptures on page 262. The word Sukhmani means Peace in your mind.)

The women took pride in this because they could show their talent and skill at playing the harmonium, *dholaki and *chimta (my mother played the chimta). The women took turns in singing the shabads finishing with the ardas and kadha parshad at 4.00 p.m. which was the same time we finished school for the day. It was a perfect beginning to the weekend.

After the sat sang, there was tea served with pakoras

Dholaki is a two-headed hand-drum used in folk music. Chimta is a musical instrument fashioned from a long, flat piece of steel or iron that is pointed at both ends, and folded over in the middle. The jingles are made of metal. It produces a metallic sound and helps to keep up the beat of the song. Jalebi is deep-fried wheat flour (maida flour) batter in circular shapes and then soaked in sugar syrup.

and * jalebis and a lot of merriment, the women catching up on the week's happenings and prepare for upcoming events while we being teenagers discussed fashion and what we were going to wear at the next Gurpurab. Bell-bottoms were the rage in the late 1960s and 1970s. As long as we had our heads covered inside the Gurudwara we were fine. The women had to make sure that all the ration, utensils, and crockery was there for the langar. Life was not very easy in those days like we did not have gas cookers and everything was cooked on coal. We did not even have a machine to knead the dough.

"Kneading the dough was the work of men," recalls Harjit Singh Pandhal. "To cook langar for a sangat of 200-300 required a lot of rotia (chapatis). There were some really strong men who did this sewa like Ram Krishan Singh and Banta Singh who could knead 50 kilogrammes of flour (atta)."

My mother valued family and community life. She reflected that back in the Gurudwara and offered her help cooking langar. During the Gurpurabs, she would stay at the Gurudwara as did many Sikh families because travelling from Kibos, Miwani and Chemelil was not easy. Many people remember my mother being very busy in the kitchen cooking. No food was wasted. It was basic food. Whatever 'bhoga' (vegetables in Kiswahili) were available were cooked.

I recall a very colourful event at the Gurudwara. In November 1969, Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 500th birthday was celebrated with a lot of festivity. My mother was awarded a certificate by Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu for her dedication and long service in the Gurudwara. At Gurpurabs, everybody wore new clothes and for the women, it was a chance to stitch new salwar kameez (tunic and pantaloons that Sikh women wear). It brought us all together. My mother's sewa did not end here. When we migrated to England in the late 1970s, she continued with her sewa in Sheffield, playing a very big part in running the Gurudwara there. She was "Mata Ji" for all. She passed away on 7th January 2007.

For the festivity, we took part in a sports event at the Sikh Union and a fancy dress party. It was fun. There was plenty of food and prizes. Deedar Singh Pardesi a famous Kenyan singer, who reached international fame, was invited from Nairobi. He sang many shabads (hymns) during the evening darbar (prayers) and swayed the congregation with the shabad, "Satguru Nanak parghat ya miti dhundh jag chanan hoya" – When the respected Guru Nanak appeared, the mist disappeared and there was light. "This Parkash Utsav* of Guru Nanak Dev Ji was celebrated with the full cooperation of Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha Kisumu with vigour and great enthusiasm. It was a landmark occasion and a series of Akhand Paths were held alternatively at both Gurudwaras each weekend," recalls Mr. Aridhaman Singh.

"We organized an exhibition on the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and produced a brochure on the life and teachings of the Guru. Bhai Lal Singh of Karnal, India and his ragi jatha (hymn singers) performed Shabad Kirtan every evening. "Sweets were distributed to children in primary schools in town but a fireworks display had to be cancelled because *Tom Mboya had been assassinated in Nairobi."

To mark the occasion, the Gurudwara started a charitable institution, the Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary which was open to the general public.

Guru Nanak Gurpurab also known as Guru Nanak's Prakash Utsav, celebrates the birth of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak. This is one of the most sacred festivals in Sikhism. The anniversaries of the 10th Sikh Gurus are known as Gurpurab (or Gurpurb) and are occasions for celebration and prayer among the Sikhs.

MEMORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS

By Surinderpal Kaur Mangat (nee Pandhal)

I attended Siri Guru Singh Sabha Girls Primary School from standard one to standard seven and graduated in 1967. Our uniform was a yellow pinafore dress with a short sleeve, white top, black shoes and white socks.

The fee was 33 shillings per term and it was due on the very first day of the school. The school was on the adjoining plot to the Gurudwara. The school was fully funded by the Sikh community and other donors.

The school hours were from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday with a two-hour lunch break from noon to 2 p.m. We had two short recesses for about 15 minutes each. I brought packed lunch from home. Milk was provided at school, but it had to be paid for. Every morning, before class began, we were encouraged to recite the morning prayers and shabads. After that, we had morning assembly at school and the principal announced upcoming events and reminded us of the school regulations.

My early recollection of school days was that I always walked to school with couple of friends and then walked back in the evening. There were no school buses and not every household had a car.

We were taught English, Math, Geography, History and Religion. Punjabi language was taught by the giani (priest) once a week for an hour. The classrooms were always very clean and there was lots of natural light. All the notes were written on the blackboard by the teacher and we copied these using pencils and notebooks.

There were about 20-30 children in each class and one teacher. As this was a Sikh school, we were taught about our culture and we put this into practice by learning our folk dance, our folk music, and celebrated all the birthdays of our 10 Gurus. We also celebrated diwali, the festival of lights. We wore new clothes, exchanged presents and burst crackers.

After finishing standard 7, I graduated to Kisumu Girls High School. It was very challenging, because there were more subjects offered. I was advised to take selected courses. At the end of my fourth year we sat for our final exams. The results were published in the local paper and that was how I found out that I had passed. I moved to Canada in 1974. It was a smooth transition into a new culture because I had a good command of the English language.

JHANDA SINGH KHERA

Surinder Singh Khera (grandson)

My grandfather Jhanda Singh Khera came to Kenya in 1928. He was educated and a well-respected man. He worked with several sugar cane farmers before establishing his own sugarcane farms in 1940.

He had two sons. My father Mukhtair Singh Khera and my uncle Deedar Singh Khera both took over the farm and expanded the business. My grandmother Mrs. Harnam Kaur Khera joined my grandfather at our Kibos farm. My grandfather Jhanda Singh was instrumental in securing the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Primary School name in 1954 when there was an attempt to change the name of the institution. He was a successful sugarcane farmer and my father and uncle inherited the cane farming business when he migrated to India in 1958. My grandfather passed away in India in 1996.

My father, Mr. Mukhtair Singh, was very active socially and was also very active in the affairs of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu. He served as Vice Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha for two years in the 1990s. He later migrated to India in 1998 and passed on in 1999 in India. I then inherited the farming business which I continue to do so and have also ventured into sugarcane transport at Kibos and Nzoia Sugar factories. I currently have served on the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Committee as a Secretary for two terms and is currently serving as Assistant Secretary.

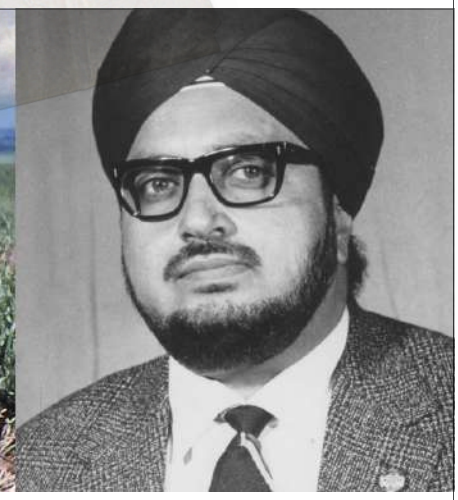
MOHAN SINGH PADAM

Mr. Mohan Singh Padam was born in Nairobi and educated in India where he completed his BCOM degree. He came to Kenya in 1954. He had joined East African Railways and Harbours at Kilindini Harbour as a clerk in 1956. He later joined Standard bank of South Africa in Kisumu and worked in Kisii upto 1975.After retiring from the bank,he established an insurance brokership in Kisumu. He has had a good name in the Insurance industry .

NYANZA SIKH HOSPITALITY

By Sir Mohinder Singh Dhillon

Born 1931 in Babar Pur – Punjab, Award winning international cameraman and Kenya's leading film maker, Mohinder Dhillon, was knighted by the Order of St Mary of Zion during a ceremony at the Royal Artillery Headquarters in Woolwich, U.K. on 12th November 2005 by Prince Philip.



Harmeet Singh Sandhu at his Kibos farm

The railways operated ships around the lake (Victoria) to ports in Tanganyika and Uganda, opening the trade and passenger services. In the 1940s, l travelled around the lake during school holidays with my school friends. For our journey of the three countries by rail and ship (SS Rusinga or SS Usoga), my father Tek Singh would write to each station master ahead of our arrival and we would be greeted and looked after with affection.

Our journey around the lake usually began from Kisumu. There was one Gurudwara in Kisumu, which was Siri Guru Singh Sabha and the focal point of all gatherings. The Sikh women cooked the meals (langar) in the name of "Sewa" (selfless service). My father along with others who were stationed in Mombasa would meet all new immigrants and those lost for where to stay would be taken to Mombasa Gurudwara. They became long-lasting friends who arranged big trays of delicious food for any happy occasion. This is the Sikh way – friendship and sewa. The Sikhs are blessed with a very practical, workable and modern religion which is less than 500 years old. The Kenyan Sikhs integrated with the local population. Many of us were fluent in the local languages – Dholuo, Kiswahili, Kikamba and so on.

I remember meeting Cabinet Minister Bill Omamo*

Sir Mohinder Singh Dhillon on assignment

in the 1960s who greeted me in Punjabi "Sat Sri Akal, Sardar Sahib." He admired the Sikhs. He was very concerned about my in-laws selling their sugar cane farm in Kibos soon after my brother-in-law Harmeet Singh Sandhu was tragically killed in a car crash in 1967. "Please keep the farm for his children who will soon be grown up," he said. "Let me tell you, Sardar Ji," Omamo said. "We never sell ancestral land." He was right but I could not run the farm from Nairobi. Nevertheless, I was moved by his humanity. When I remarked about this, he said, "I have read a translation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In the Ardas (prayer), you praise humility and shun arrogance. I practice this teaching." The Sikh community has played a very important role in developing the Nyanza area particularly in sugar cane agriculture, pioneering methods in farming, workshop engineering, civil and electrical engineering. We have had a learned crop of lawyers, doctors and teachers, many who were prominent.

There was a strong bond and unity amongst Kibos farmers who started to expand to other areas. Kehar Singh Sandhu my late father-in-law was the first farmer in Kiboswa (near Kibos). The next generation of Sikhs diversified into designing and manufacturing sugarcane trolleys pulled by tractors.

Accidental fires in the sugar fields were and are quite common. Farmers then and today will come together with their tractors to create fire breaks and transport the burnt cane quickly to the sugar cane factories before the cane loses more juice. In 1965, I was hired to shoot a film on weeds for a prestigious TV program "World in Action". It was about weeding without damaging the root including hair roots. I learnt from my in-laws farm something unique about weeding.

During harvesting the workers removed the leafy covering around the sugarcane and spread it in the field. This killed the weed due to lack of sunlight, nourished the roots of the new sugar harvest and the leaf-cover saved moisture in the ground which eventually decomposed and turned into a natural organic fertilizer finally producing organic sugar. I believe this unique method was pioneered in Kibos. I have travelled many countries in the world looking at weeding methods and no one knows about this method.

Farmers in developed countries spray crop with weed-killer which killed the weed after the harvest but pollutes the ground with chemicals. Mechanised weeding disturbs the roots impairing the growth of plant. I enjoyed the love of the Nyanza farmers because I was married into a Kibos family of late Kehar Singh and being their son-in-law, everyone treated me like their son-in-law.

GROWING UP IN KIBOS

By Surinderpal Kaur Mangat (nee Pandhal)

Growing up in Kibos evokes wonderful memories that spans decades. There was a lot of closeness and friendship. We as children (1940S and 1950s) had a simple life but it was fun. We made our own clay toys and out of old pieces of cloth, we even made balls.

Going to school from Kibos to Kisumu was an adventure. We relied on an old school bus, the road if it rained there was every chance the bus was going to be stuck somewhere in the black cotton soil and our bus driver's mood. It was a miracle on the days we arrived at school before the bell rang.

The days it rained, we were not only late but muddy too from pushing the bus or walking the last few miles to school through the muck. And then we had to wash our muddy shoes at the nearest water pipe before being allowed in class. The Siri Guru Singh Sabha was the hub of early education and religious influence in Kisumu. Our primary education was at Siri Guru Singh Sabha Girls School. The Gurpurab days were the high light of our day. We wore new clothes and got 10 to 20 cents to spend on the day. We didn't have pocket money in those days. There was a lot of social interaction in those days. The local farming families in the area visited each other, making it a whole day affair. We either walked or rode on the behl-gaddhi (ox-cart wagon). The women made lunch, talked and laughed. If time permitted they would embroider, sew or engage in other handwork. Children played but the older girls were encouraged to learn to cook and sew.

Education was limited for girls in early days. My older sisters and cousins finished school at the age of 12, as parents did not value girls' education. However this changed as times went by and I was fortunate to complete my GCSE O levels in 1961 and taught at Siri Guru Singh Sabha for a year before I got married. I migrated to England with my husband and daughter when she was a few months old. After my son was born I went to Birmingham City University and completed my studies in Social Science and worked for Wolver Hampton Council for 14 years and then as a senior practitioner in a neighbouring authority. I retired as a team manager for a team of 18 to 20 people.

DHANWANT SINGH

By Supree Soin (grandson)

The Law Society of Kenya

Telephone No. 25558
Our reference: P/3
Your reference:

P.O. Box 12219
NAIROBI
Kenya

19th March, 1971

Mrs. Dhanwant Singh,
P.O. Box 435,
Kisii.

Dear Mrs. Dhanwant Singh,

On behalf of the President and the members of the Law Society of Kenya, I have been asked to convey to you their deep sympathy on the occasion of the recent tragic death of your husband.

He was one of the oldest members of this Society and will always be remembered as a fellow Advocate of the highest order and integrity. He was a friend to all who knew him and will be a great loss to his profession.

The thoughts of us all are with you on your sad bereavement.

Yours sincerely,

A.D. Aitchison
Secretary

My grandfather was born in Gujranwala in present day Pakistan on 25 December 1892. In 1909, at the age 17 he was sent to London to study law at the Imperial University where he graduated as a solicitor. On 26th January 1917, he was called to the BAR at Middle Temple. He settled in Kenya in 1928. A high achiever, he held important ranks in many organizations. He was elected the first non-white mayor of Kisumu from 1938 to 1941 and was amongst the first members of the Legco council. On 9th June 1949 he was honoured with an MBE by King George for legal Services Rendered. He served as chairman of the Lions Club and president of the Law Society of Kenya. Upon his death in 1971, the high court in Kisumu was adjourned for the day as a mark of respect. He was the founding member of the Kenyan Indian Society and was honoured by the First Aga Khan on his visit to Kisumu in the mid 1950s. A farmer at heart, Dhanwant Singh owned 1500 acres in Kibos and 500 in Miwani. The road behind the law court of Kisumu and the road along the lake were named after him - Dhanwant Singh Road.

BAKHTAWAR SINGH FAMILY

By Charanjit Singh Hayer

Dr. Bakhtawar Singh and his Family have been associated with the Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Kisumu for the best part of the last century. This association dates back to 1939 when he set up as a General Practitioner in Kisumu. Having graduated in Medicine from the King Edward Medical College, Lahore, he arrived in Kenya in the early 1930s.

Prior to 1939, he lived in Nairobi, Mombasa, Eldoret & Kisii. He moved around on health grounds and arrived in Kisumu, which suited him health wise. He remained in Kisumu for the rest of his days. He was a prominent member of the Sikh Community and a Doctor. He maintained his connection with the Gurudwara as one of its Sangat and briefly as President in the late 50's.

He was in the management of the Sikh Union starting with its revival in 1948. The Sikh Union with its tennis courts, was sited behind the Gurudwara's premises, and he played a lead role in the acquisition of the current much larger site where its successor, the Simba Union is now located.

Dr. Bakhtawar Singh's father was a revenue officer, who served as a Deputy Collector in the Irrigation Department in the then Punjab. He had interest in land ownership and agriculture in Lyallpur District. Dr. Bakhtawar Singh continued in this vein, maintaining close connection and interest with the community of Sikh farmers in Kibos and Miwani area where he eventually acquired a farm.

He took considerable pride in being a farmer. He participated in the endeavors of the farming community to secure and improve the operational circumstances for the sugar cane farmers who were at that time predominantly Sikh. This involved consultations with the government on pricing, processing and marketing of the cane produce of the farmers as well as maintenance of law and order on terms similar to those the government had established for the farmers in the then 'White Highlands'.

Dr. Bakhtawar Singh's wife Mrs. Sukhbir Kaur also established close connection with the Sikh community as a pioneer teacher of Sikh girls in Kisumu and surrounding areas. In the late 40's, she was the headmistress of the Sikh Girls School established by Singh Sabha Kisumu. In this role she oversaw the primary education of almost the entire generation of Sikh girls. She developed a very caring and warm relationship with her students.

Some of these students are still with us. Her students continue to remember her with affection and some are pictured in the group photograph from late 40's in this brochure. Mrs. Sukhbir Kaur also played a significant role in social work for the women in the wider Indian community. From the late 1940's to early 1960's she served as President of Bhagini Samaj - a social welfare association for Indian women predominantly from the Gujarati community.

Dr. Bakhtawar Singh was 63 when he passed away in 1968. Mrs. Sukhbir Kaur continued to remain in Kisumu and she was 79 when she passed away in 1994. Although now settled in the UK their three sons have continued to maintain a strong and warm connection with the Singh Sabha Gurudwara and its Sangat.

Manmeet, 79, pursued a career in medicine as a Urologist and is now retired. As is Parmeet, 74, who studied Economics and spent the first half of his career in the Kenyan Civil Service where he rose to the position of Directorship of the Central Bureau of Statistics, before moving to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and then on to the United Nations. And Rameet, 65, who also pursued a career in medicine as an Anesthetist and has also retired. The Singh Sabha Gurudwara played a significant role in their upbringing as Sikhs. They look upon the Gurudwara as the principal manifestation and embodiment of their spiritual faith. Indeed it is with pride that they acknowledge the dedication of all the Elders of the preceding generation and current Sewadars who have seen the Gurudwara Sahib through its first century

INDER SINGH KALA SINGH

By Amarjit Singh Banwaitt

Inder Singh, Kala Singh (s/o Kala Singh), born in 1863 in Jalandhar, was married to Attar Kaur born in Punjab in 1865. He was an established trader and merchant in South Africa who decided to seek opportunities in Kenya.

Inder Singh acquired the nickname "freehold" because of the large farming empire he owned, 1400 acres of sugarcane farming. This started with 25 acres of barren land being given to him by the British government, as gratitude for services rendered. A versatile businessman and shrewd merchant, he sourced and developed a unique sugar cane seed from India that aided his vast success in sugar cane farming. He is also known to have met the great Mahatma Gandhi.

Amongst the early exclusive and prized possessions of the Inder Singh Estate, were a British built and imported Austin A40, and a CAT D4 tractor, an envy of many neighbouring farmers.

As Inder Singh established his substantial estate, he helped settle a lot of British Indian immigrants in Miwani, Kibos and Port Florence (now Kisumu). Such immigrants and settlers, including Jagat Singh, and Bhagat Singh of Miwani, would be brought in to help on the estate and then given land of their own. A community soon established itself in these areas. A school was built by Inder Singh Kala Singh.

Other prominent farmers soon joined the farming community, the family of Jagir Singh's father, Gurdial Singh Pandhal's father (Jagat Singh Pandhal),

Inder Singh Kala Singh

Father of Bibi Ajit K Bainwaitt & Father inlaw of Amarjit S Banwaitt

Dasondha Singh, Santa Singh and his son Raghbir Singh. Very quickly, a substantial Indian community of skilled workers and traders was established in Port Florence too. Some of the early settlers included Lal Singh and Labu Ram Singh, the cart manufacturer, and Gurbux Singh Dhanota. Inder Singh had a son Amar Singh who was born in 1907 in Miwani, Kenya. Amar Singh married Dharam Kaur, from India. They had a healthy family of eight children. The eldest daughter Ajit Kaur got married to a college graduate from India, Sardar Atma Singh Bainwaitt who settled as a farmer in Kibos and Miwani. Sardar Atma Singh Banwaitt, who became a prominent leader and Sewadar of the Gurudwara.

The Gurudwara became a social hub for the community. A prominent tree on the right of the front entrance became a meeting place. Sardar Atma Singh's wife, Bibi Ajit Kaur, was a teacher at the local Miwani School that was opened up by the Amar Singh Estate. Ajit Kaur was involved in running the ladies Sat Sang every week and the Sangat would love to hear her recite from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. She became a prominent Pathan at the Gurudwara. These leaders of the community inspired the community to work together to enhance their social and religious requirements.

Sardar Atma Singh gave many years of community service. He helped establish the Sikh School where the first Headmistress was Ms. Headley. Sardar Atma Singh and Sardar Bachitar Singh of Kibos, acted as School Governors. He was the Secretary of the Gurudwara, and had the forte of delivering on flowing speeches on religion, literature and community spirit, with little or no preparation. Sardar Atma Singh had great social skills and he was often called upon for mediation between many quarrels and qualms between the community families. He was involved in setting up the Sikh Union clubs in Kisumu and Kibos, collecting donations and promoting fund raising activities. Sardar Atma Singh also orchestrated the start of the Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary, which looked after the needs of the Sikh community's health issues for many years to come at very subsidized or free health care.

To further entertain the community, additional roles were taken up by Sardar Atma Singh. He arranged prominent singers like Mohammed Rafi, Assa Singh Mastana, Surinder Kaur, Didar Singh Pardesi to visit Kisumu. These famous singers would often be asked to recite Shabads at the Gurudwara, thus entertaining the Sikh community and keep the goodwill of the performers. Atma Singh's daughter Surinder Kaur Sagoo is a well-established business enterpreneur in Nairobi. She often visits Kisumu and maintains her contact with the community and the Gurudwara.

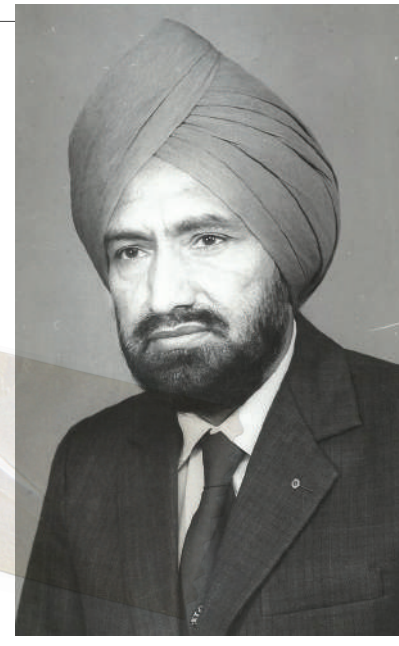
JAGAT SINGH SAINI

By Parminder Singh Saini

My father Jagat Singh Saini was born in 1923 in Phagwara, India. He was 11 years old when he was brought to Kenya by his older brother Sardar Bhagat Singh. He started working at Miwani Sugar Mills Limited at a very young age in the late 1930s as a fitter, earning a meager Kshs. 30 per month. At age 21, he returned to India to get married and returned with his wife, Prakash Kaur. He continued working at the sugar mill until he bought a 120-acre sugar farm and built a house by the river where he worked and lived until his death at the age of 86. My father was a committee member of Siri Guru Singh Sabha for many years and served a two-year term as vice-chairman. My brother, Balvir Singh joined my father and started a transport business and extended the sugar farm successfully. Unfortunately he passed away in 1991at the age of 43 after which l took over the business which operates to date.

WATTAN SINGH RUPRAH

By Family



He was a university graduate from Punjab India and came to Kenya in 1946. He was the managing partner of two firms; m/s Mangal Singh Engineering Works and m/s Mangal Singh Ruprah farm.

• Honourable General Secretary, Siri Guru Singh Sabha for 10 years • Honourable Secretary for 10 years, trustees for 9 years, Vice Chairman for 2 years and Chairman for 14 years from 1976 of Ramgharia Sikh Sabha • Vice President of the Indian Association of Kisumu from 1957 to 1980 • Member, Asian Hospital Advisory committee from 1956 to 1979 • Vice President of Kisumu Education Society and Devjibhai Hindocha Secondary School for 5 years and, chairman for 25 years since 1963 • Chairman Hindu Crematertum for 12 years • Honourable Correspondent for the British High Commission for 16 years since 1975.

RATTAN SINGH RUPRAH

By Parminder Singh Saini

Mr.Ratan Singh Ruprah and Mrs Achhar Kaur Ruprah. He is the grandfather to Mr. Swaran Singh Ruprah who came to Kenya in 1918 and settled in Kibos. Swaran Singh fulfils his annual sewa for the Nishaan Sahib at the Gurudwara.

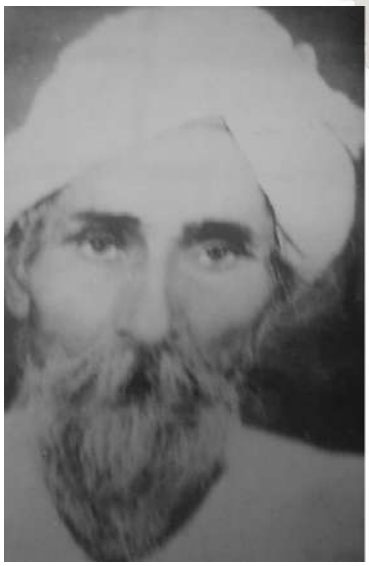
SHAM & SWARAN

Sham Singh studied at Khalsa College in Lahore and Swaran Kaur studied nursing at Khalsa College Amristsar before moving to Kenya. Swaran Kaur was always known for her dedication to sewa at the Gurudwara in Kisumu.

NIHAL SINGH BRAH

By Amarjeet Singh (grandson)

My grandfather Sardar Nihal Singh Brah came from India in early 1910. At that time, he was employed by the British Government then he came and settled in Kibos along with the other Sikh farmers, started cane farming and made jaggery. He was married to Mrs. Basant Kaur Brah and they were blessed with five boys and two girls.



He then moved back to his native village, Bheromuna, District Ludhiana, Punjab India. Both my grandparents passed on in India. The farming business was then handed over to my father, Ranjit Singh Brah and his two brothers Harjit Singh Brah and Mohinder Singh Brah, who were also very hard working and became successful sugarcane farmers, transporters and jaggery manufactures in Kibos.

My late father, Ranjit Singh Brah became the Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha between 14/04/1978 to 13/04/1980. My late mother, Sardani Rajinder Kaur Brah served as an ardent Sewadar of Siri Guru Singh Sabha – Kisumu all her life.

My uncle Mohinder Singh Brah also served as Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha from 13/04/2005 to 13/04/2007. His wife, Sardani Harpal Kaur Brah is the current Chairlady of the Istri Sabha of Siri Guru Singh Sabha. My brother Billay and I have taken up after my father's legacy and carried on with sugarcane farming.

BISHAN SINGH HAYER

By Charanjit Singh Hayer

Bishan Singh Hayer was born in 1915 in the village of Littra in the Punjab. A young energetic fearless man he landed in Mombasa aboard a ship in 1937.

He worked in Nambale Ginnery for a while before he was employed at Inder Singh Gill's saw mill in Jinja, Uganda. Eventually, in partnership with Chanan Singh and Pritam Singh Jandhu, from Uganda, they established themselves as logging contractors in Kakamega Forest near Lubao in Kenya.

In 1945, my mother, Sucham Kaur Hayer joined my father. I was born in July 1946. A year later my brother Sarnargar Singh was born. We then moved to Rostermine in Kakamega where my father worked as a supervisor in a gold mine. My other siblings, sisters Rajinder, Davinder, Naginder, Kuldip and brother, Gurbux were born in Kakamega.

After a short spell in Rostermine at the end of Second World War, my father bought his first car and a used army lorry truck and started a transport business ferrying timber amongst other things. He also had a ration shop supplying daily rations but is was not successful so he stuck to transport and also started taking small building contracts in partnership with Chanan Singh and Pritam Singh Jandu of Uganda. My father looked after the Kenyan side of operations. One of his major building contracts being the Kisumu Police Station building which still stands today.

I remember my father came down with black water twice. Those were difficult days. We were all young. Lots of friends used to come to visit my father during his difficult time and they were mostly Gujaratis. However, with Waheguru's grace, he came through. As the transport and contract business in Kakamega expanded, we never missed celebrations at the Gurudwara in Kisumu. Our father would wake us up at 4 a.m. for the all weather road trip to Kisumu in the back of an open pick-up through the forest. My father wanted a good education for us and moved to Kisumu in 1960 so that we could attend good schools.

Sh. Bishan Singh's family

In 1961 my father went solo in business. The transport business grew and we were transporting jaggery, kerosene and timber to Nairobi, Mwanza and Kampala. My brother, Sarnargar, my two sisters and l were sent to the United Kingdom for further studies. I graduated as a civil engineer, my brother Sarnagar graduated in mettalurgy and my sisters in nursing. My father started the quarry at Daraja Mbili in the 1967. I returned to Kenya in 1971 as a graduate engineer when I got married to my wife Harjit Kaur. My brother Gurbux, who had gone to the United Kingdom for a short period, returned to work with my father in 1974. My father died in 1976 followed by my mother in 1987. Together with my brothers Sarnagar and Gurbux, we renamed the company as Hayer Bishan Singh and Sons (HBS) which is today a well established business under the flagship of Hayer Group. As a construction company, HBS is associated with the development of infrastructure in Kenya. HBS has had a role in rebuilding Kisumu International Airport to international standards. It has tarmacked some major roads in western Kenya and worked on the Kwale Dam for Base Titanium. HBS has since expanded its construction business to Southern Sudan, pioneering the mapping of all weather roads. Prior to our arrival, South Sudan had just been through a civil war. The region where we worked mapping out the all-weather roads was dangerous. The area was full of land mines, wild animals and people who had just come out from the ravages of war. My brother, Sarnargar, also served as a Chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha from 2003 to 2005 during which time he focused on the improvements in the Gurudwara and Primary School. My brother, Gurbux passed away in 1996. He is fondly remembered by all family and friends. My cousins, the late Balwinder Singh Hayer and Mohinder Singh Nagra came from in India to Kenya in 1979 to work with us in the family business. Their families are now well established here and second generation Kenyans.

BUKAN SINGH SANDHU

This is a brief history of the family of Mr Bukan Singh Sandhu. During their time in Kenya, they were dedicated and loyal sewadars of the Gurudwara. They are fondly remembered for their contribution as frequent suppliers of vegetables and other groceries to the Gurudwara. Even today, the love of the family's descendents for Kisumu and the Gurudwara is evident. The extended family members in Kenya remain loyal Sewadars while families from overseas are frequent visitors to Kisumu.

Mr Bukan Singh Sandhu was born in a village in Sarinh District, Jallandhar, Punjab in 1903. Bukan Singh had gone to Jallandhar to purchase supplies when he made his way to Kenya without informing his family. He made contact with his family one year after his arrival at the port of Mombasa in Kenya. During that period, he was feared dead by his family. On the way to Kenya, his boat capsized and he had to swim for his life before being rescued by a passing boat. After various jobs, Bukan Singh ended up in Kericho working for the Chadha family. Here, he learnt how to drive and went into transport industry during the Second World War. n 1944, he invited his wife Harnam Kaur and three sons Pritam Singh, Gurdial Singh and Darshan Singh to join him and started trading as Bukan Singh, Maya Singh and Sons. Eventually, they ended up as the main haulage and building contractor for Macalder Nyanza mines (Gold & Copper mine). Bukan Singh, a successful, benevolent gentleman had Posho (Flour) Mills and shops in Migori and Kisii.They also had residences in Kisumu, Kisii, Migori and Macalder, where there was always a meal and bed available to anyone. This practice is still prevalent within his descendants. Immediate family members of Bukhan Singh - (sons and their families - Pritam Singh, Gurdial Singh and Darshan Singh families) live abroad mostly in United Kingdom and United States of America, Nairobi, Kisumu and Kampala, Uganda. Bukan Singh's other relatives live in Kenya & Uganda (through marriages of children and grand-children).

JARNAIL SINGH SIDHU

By Jasminder Singh Sidhu (son)

Sardar Jarnail Singh Sidhu son of Bishen Singh Sidhu of Daudhar Punjab came to Kenya on 12th October 1938 and enlisted to the East African Forces during the 2nd world war where he excelled. He later settled in Kibos in the 1950's.

One of his sons Dr. Durudeep Singh Sidhu worked as a doctor and served at Guru Nanak Harambee Dispensary, Kisumu for a number of years, before settling in Canada.

Most of the family members have settled in United Kingdom. Sardar Jarnail Singh's daughters-in-law, Sarbit Kaur Sidhu, was a headmistress of Singh Sabha Primary and Nursery School for a number of years and Treasurer of lstri Sabha for 2 years in 1990s.

SURJIT SINGH SIDHU

By Harvinder Singh Sidhu (son)

My father Surjeet Singh Sidhu was a successful farmer and a gentleman. He also served as Chairman of Nyanza Hockey Association. He was the son of Kala Singh who came to Kenya in 1908 with his brother Kishen Singh Sidhu to start farming. My grandfather and his brothers donated one acre of land for a school that is still present today under the name Jagir Singh Sidhu.

My grandmother Kishen Singh Sidhu was Chairlady of Istri Sabha in the 1960's. My wife Harupinder Kaur Sidhu worked as head teacher for Singh Sabha Primary and Nursery School for four years.

SANTA SINGH CHATTHE

By Chanan Singh Chatthe

My father Sardar Santa Singh was born in 1902 in Nurpur Jalandhar and came to Kenya in 1918. He worked in Kenya Uganda railway as a labourer for four years in Kisumu then known as Port Florence in the Kibos area.

Later he joined his elder brother Sadhu Singh in the sugar farming and jaggery manufacturing business. He later returned to India and got married to my mother Mrs. Raj Kaur who joined him in Kibos, Kenya in July 1925

We were three brothers all born in Kibos, the eldest brother was S. Resham Singh and my younger brother was S. Ajit Singh who both passed on in Kibos. My five sisters are Mrs. Balbir Kaur Sandhu, Mrs. Gurmit Kaur Kular, Mrs. Nirmaljeet Kaur Kaler,Mrs Gurcharan Kaur Radhara and Mrs. Jaswant Kaur Mangat. My sisters are well settled in UK and one in California U.S.A.

I was born on 26th July 1927 in Kibos and did my primary education in Kisumu and my high school education in Kisumu at the Government Indian High School now Kisumu Boys High School and later moved to India to the District Board (D.B.) high school at Nakodar, Punjab India and witnessed the massacre at that time. I later moved back to Kenya and started working at the Roster mine, Goldmine in Kakamega as a power house shift man for eight years. I later joined my father in his sugarcane farm and by which time he had separated the farming

business with his brother and we had a 50acre cane farm. My father and my brothers worked hard and increased the farming business to 350acres and also bought a big farm in our village in Nurpur, Punjab, India. At that time we were amongst the big land owners in the Jalandhar district India.

By the grace of the Almighty Waheguru and his blessings, hard work, faith paid with my family, sons and daughters as well settled in Kenya, UK and U.S.A. In 1987, August 23, our family suffered a huge loss in which we lost five members of our family, my wife Ajit Kaur, My son in - law Travinder Gundara, my two daughters in- laws Updesh Kaur and Surinder Kaur and my granddaughter Avneet Kaur. Waheguru gave us the strength and courage to bear the irreplaceable loss and with faith in Waheguru three of my sons have inherited our family business of sugarcane farming and expanded the same into sugarcane transport, land development , contractors and also agro processing. We became the first Sikh family to establish a sugar mill in Kenya which is named after the area "Kibos Sugar and Allied Industries Limited". Currently we are expanding the sugar factory to 3500 tons per day with a 15M.W. co-generation power plant and are proposing to set up a Pulp and paper Mill and a Distillery to produce portable and industrial ethanol as value added product. Two of my sons Gursharan Singh and Kewal Singh are well settled in the U.S.A. my eldest son is also well settled in India.

Our association with Siri Guru Singh Sabha- Kisumu goes as far back as 1920's when we went to school in 1930 on Oxen cents, we used to ride them along the railway line and stay at the Gurudwara all week and come back to Kibos on weekends, the Gurudwara has been a very influential institution in our growing up and has kept us close to our faith and religion. I am humbled to have been Sewadar of this institution as a committee member, Assistant treasurer and trustee, Vice chairman and Chairman and trustee for over fifty years.

My son Satwant Singh has also served on the committee for many years and has also been a chairman. My youngest son Raghbir Singh has also served on the committee for many years in various capacities viz treasurer, assistant secretary and now vice chairman. He has also served as chairman of the Sikh Union – Kisumu and has been on its committee in various capacities for many years.

My family of five generations has been institution whom we refer to as our 'HARMANDIR SAHIB' in Kenya. It started with my parents and my great grandchildren are also blessed and privileged to be doing sewa of this Gurudwara.

My grandson Jassi and Dilraj are also active in Motor Sport Rally, Auto cross and Go- Karting. My great grandsons also participate in Go-Karting. We are very grateful to Almighty Waheguru to have showered his blessings on our family and all the sewadar of this institution in the last 100 years and pray for his blessings to continue forever over his followers, mankind sewadar of this institution and pray for peace in our loved country Kenya.

JIWAN SINGH PANDHAL

By Taranjeet Singh Pandhal

Jiwan Singh Padhaal "Bwana Kubwa" as the locals called him came to Kenya in 1921. He came on the request of Babu Jagat Singh. He was married to Mata Ganji and had 4 daughters and two sons.

After working for Babu Jagat Singh for a while, he ventured into sugarcane farming himself. He passed away in 1941. His elder son Jaswant Singh Padhaal (right) took over from him after his death at a tender age of 16 and looked after the family and continued the farm until his death in 1991. The younger son Harvinder Singh qualified as a dentist and is now settled in the UK. He was a very good sportsman and set the High Jump record at Kisumu High School back in 1969 which still stands to date. Apart from High Jump he was active in Hockey, Badminton and other sports. He married Daljit Kaur daughter of Jagir Singh Sidhu and have one son and one daughter.

Jaswant Singh married Parvinder Kaur and they have 2 sons and 3 daughters. The daughters are settled in UK and USA. After Jaswant's death the two sons Taranjeet (Tarne) and Gurbeer carried on the farming business. Gurbeer was a very good sportsman and excellent at Hockey. He represented the Kenya National Side and was one of the pillars of the Simba Union team.

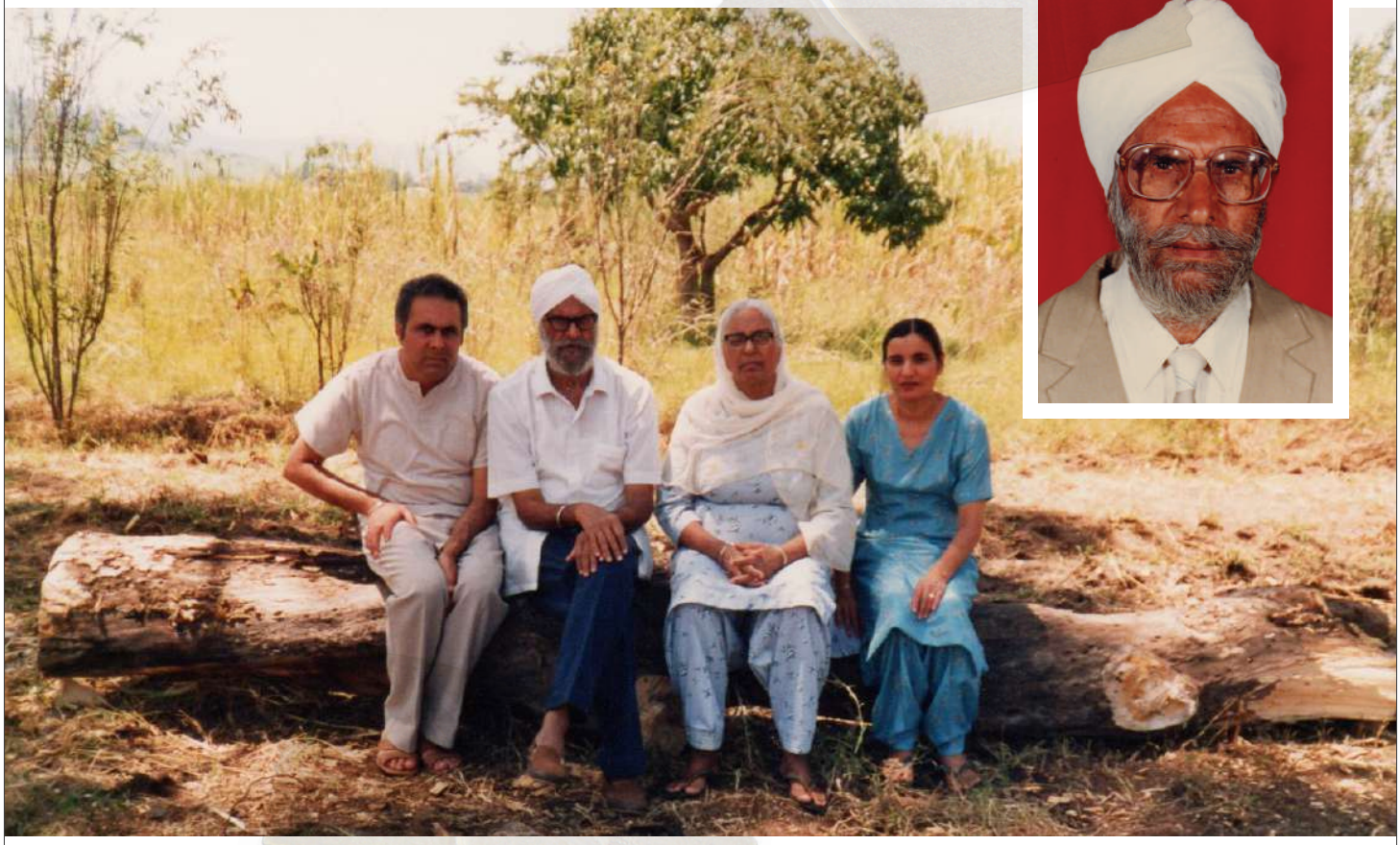
Jaswant was a member of Siri Guru Singh Sabha managing committees for over 30 years and also served as chairman 1983-84.

The elder son Tarne qualified as a civil engineer and worked for the Hayer group before starting his own company Farm Engineering Industries Ltd (FEIL) in 1984 partnered by his schoolmate from Nairobi, Swarnjit Singh Bhurji (Jit) who had moved to Kisumu in 1978 also a civil engineer. Jit currently resides in Kisumu and is married to Manjit and they have 2 daughters. Today, FEIL is one of the leading agricultural and construction equipment supplier in the East African Region with branches in Kisumu, Nairobi, Mombasa and spread to Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and Ethiopia. Tarne moved to Uganda in 2001 and looks after this business in Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan while Jit handles Kenya and Ethiopia.

Tarne is currently the chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kampala and has represented on the committees of S.G.S.S. in Kisumu and Simba Union for over 20 years and held various posts. His son Ravi and mother Parvinder Kaur live with him. Parvinder Kaur has been very involved in the Langer Sewa in Kisumu and is currently doing the same in Kampala. She provides guidance to the younger generation.
Jit currently serves on the managing committees of S.G.S.S. Kisumu and also served in Simba Union for several years.

BACHITTAR SINGH SANDHU

Bachitar Singh Sandhu was born on 23rd August 1920 in Boparai Kalan, Punjab. He emigrated to Kibos, Kenya at the age of 16 or 17 and married Bachan Kaur in 1941. They had five children: one son and four daughters.



During 1944-45, he worked for East African Military Records, after which he took over the running of the family farm from his father Partial Singh. He was very active in the local community. During the 1960s and 70s, he was the Secretary of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara and also Chairman of the Kibos Miwani Agriculture Committee, which helped farmers get loans from the Land and Agriculture Bank. He was also a member of the Nyanza Farmers' Cooperative Society, which helped farmers by distributing funds to them from the sugar mills they supplied.

He passed away on 8th July 1992 and is survived by his wife and four of his children: three daughters Kamal, Narinder and Manjeet and one son, Baljeet. The other daughter, Sukhwinder, passed away on 8 March 1993.

RASHPAL SINGH SACHDEVA

Raspal Singh Sehdeva came to Kenya from India with his family in 1982. His wife Jaswinderjit Kaur Sehdeva, is a dedicated Sewadars in the preparation of the Langar in the Gurudwara. She has been doing the Langar Sewa since 1990. Raspal Singh Sehdeva supervised the construction of the new building.

SHINGARA SINGH KARWAL

Shingara Singh Karwal moved to Kenya with his wife Amarjit Kaur Karwal in 1980. They have four sons; Satantar Singh Karwal, Tajinder Singh Karwal, Satbir Singh Karwal and Harjodh Singh Karwal. He was Secretary of the Gurudwara from 1988 to 1999. A talented carpenter, he did the Sewa of refurbishing the Palaki Sahib amongst other wood work in the Darbar Sahib. The family have relocated to Nairobi but remain attached to Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu.

JAGJIT SINGH MUNDE

Born in Kericho and studied at Highland Primary School in Kericho and Kisumu Boys High School in Kisumu, I worked with Panesar Building Company and later joined my uncle Darbara Singh Deogan at Jagjit joinery Works. During this period, we carried out several small and large Building Projects for different Government Ministries and Private Developers. I am a life member and had been active at the Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha for several years. Also served in the constrcution of Guru Nanak Darbar, and of the Nursery School of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. I enjoy charitable work, a member of the Lions Club of Kisumu Rural, past Chairman of Kisumu Simba Club, Equator Motors Sports, Member of Nyanza Hockey Association and others. Also honoured for services rendered to Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Kisumu.

ARIDAMAN SINGH THIND

Ex-Deputy Headmaster, Kisumu Boys High School

Soon after completing his M.A. (Maths) and B.T (Ed) degrees in India, he got married to Baldev Kaur and came to Kenya in December, 1955. His first appointment as a teacher in February 1956 was at Central Primary School, Kisumu. He stayed there for a year and was then transferred to Kisumu Boys High School. His entire teaching career of 32 years was spent in Kisumu. There is not any family in Kisumu and Kibos whose children were not taught by him. And in some cases he had even taught two generations of the same family. He was a highly successful A level Maths teacher who earned great respect and admiration from his pupils. His sincere hard work and dedication got him a well-deserved promotion to the post of Deputy Headmaster. And even for two long periods of six months and one-half year in 1974 and 1978 respectively he was the acting Headmaster of Kisumu Boys High School.

Besides teaching, his main interest was hockey. As the school coach he led the boys to a record twelve National Secondary Schools Hockey Titles. He was the founder member of Nyanza Hockey Association and served on its committee in different capacities of Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman for over two decades. His participation in the social and cultural activities of the town is a record in itself. From 1980-82 he was the Secretary of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu. And this was the time when Sabha's both schools Nursery and Primary were built and started. He remained the manager of these two schools until the time he left Kisumu in 1987. On the cultural side he was the person who introduced Bhangra for the first time ever in Kenya when he and a group of his pupils from Central Primary School performed at the 1956 Commonwealth Day Celebrations. Later in 1963 he and his team of adults did Bhangra at the Uhuru Celebration.

His wife Mrs Baldev Kaur was a Primary School teacher. She taught for almost twenty years in four different schools of Kisumu including Sri Guru Singh Sabha's Primary School. The Thinds had three children who were all born and brought up in Kisumu. Their daughter Pushpinder (Pushi) was the eldest. She became a Pharmacist and her marriage was performed in 1981 at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu. She and her husband Baldev Laly now live in Portsmouth, UK and have their own Pharmacies. The eldest son Gursharan (Papu) is a Chartered Civil Engineer. He is married to Peramjeet and they both work and live in London. The younger son Jitender (Gugli) is a Chartered Accountant and lives and works in London.

After leaving Kisumu in 1987, Mr Aridaman became Headmaster of Aga Khan Mzizima Secondary School in Dar Es Salaam. He stayed there til December 2001 and is now retired in Hounslow, London. He is a living legend for all of his ex-pupils and by his deeds and actions, has made the Sikh community of Kisumu proud.

MISTRY AMAR SINGH DHANJAL

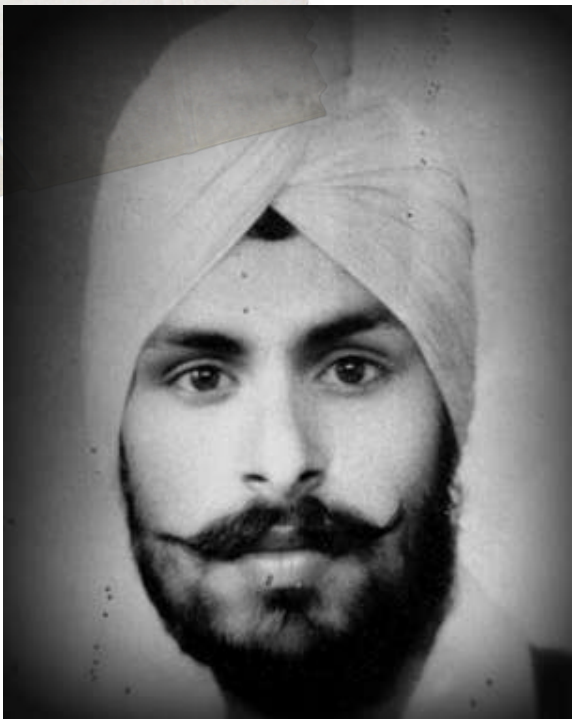
Sardar Amar Singh Dhanjal was born on 19th August 1898 in a village called Derh Gwar in District Gurdaspur in Punjab. He lost his father at an early age and became responsible for looking after his mother; wife and two younger brothers. It is said that he first went to Burma to earn his living but had to leave there because of war.

In 1921 he decided to come to Kenya and joined the Marine Department in Kisumu. His plan was to save Rs 3000 and go back to India to set up business but circumstances changed and he stayed on, working during evenings and week – ends. He was fortunate not to lose his job during the recession of the thirties when the department's 35 members of staff were laid off. Meanwhile, he got his brothers to Kenya and got them jobs.

He retired from the Marine Workshop in 1944 and embarked on engineering business, Reliance Engineering Works, with three other partners. After a few years he opted out and set up his on Paramount Engineering Works helped by sons Dhanwant Singh, Satwant Singh and Gurmukh Singh. Satwant Singh now runs the business. Eldest son Surjeet Singh is now a retired cardiologist and Ajit Singh is a retired Teacher / Telecommunications Engineer.

Sardar Amar Singh was always very involved in the Sikh religious affairs having joined the Singh Sabha Lehar in the forties. On several occasions, he acted as President of the Gurudwaras Siri Guru Singh Sabha (from 26/11/1947-28/2/1950 and 12/1/1962 to 13/4/1964) and the Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha, Kisumu. He was amongst among the earlier sewadars who made improvements to the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara building and while working on the roof he fell down dangerously and was lucky to survive.

AGIA SINGH PANESAR



S. Agia Singh Panesar son of S. Mala Singh Panesar & Jawali Kaur Panesar was born on the 20th April 1924 in Sukuruli-India. His father S. Mala Singh was a renowned builder in Kampala, where he had migrated to in 1918 from India. He received his training skills from his father in the early ages and in 1942 migrated to Nairobi from Kampala to search for better opportunity. He got married to Mohinder Kaur Panesar. In 1950, S. Paramjit Singh Panesar was born in Nairobi and in 1951, S. Gurdev Singh Panesar was born in Kampala. Two younger girls were born later during the years. The zeal of learning electricity rather than the family trade of 'Building and Construction' led S. Agia Singh Panesar to seek the necessary training as an Electrician in Nairobi where he also worked. In 1959, he passed the Ministry of Energy Electricians Examinations and was awarded a Class 'A' License to carry out any electrical works without any restrictions. In 1961, S. Agia Singh Panesar moved with the family to Kisumu on seeing the opportunity of a growing town and worked at the famous 'Patel Flats' and the New Nyanza General Hospital as an electrician. Various other jobs were also attended to. In 1966, He formed 'Panesar Electrical Works' that carried out various notable jobs within the region. In 1971 S. Agia Singh Panesar passed away in a tragic road accident. His father S. Mala Singh passed away a week later. The company 'Panesar Electrical Works' was now under the hands of Late S. Paramjit Singh Panesar an Electrical engineer and Gurdev Singh Panesar.

S. Agia Singh Panesar was a very philanthropic person of nature and kind hearted. He believed in earning an honest living and even having little did not matter – it had to be gained honestly. The elders of the town often say that during his financial hardship he still had the will to support his friends and made trips to Kibos taking clean drinking water for S. Phagat Singh family (the father of Mama Raasto). The humbleness of giving back to the community is still witnessed in the family. All electrical works at both the Sabha's in Kisumu are carried out by the family. The Hall, Accommodation and Library Block at Siri Guru Singh Sabha was carried out in memory of Late Paramjit Singh Panesar. The renovated Siri Guru Singh Sabha Darbar Sahib Electrical works was carried out in 1998 at no cost exception for the Light fixtures. The Panesar family also voluntarily provided labour and expertise at no cost at the newly built Guru Nanak Darbar Temple. The legacy is being upheld by Sardani Mahan Kaur Panesar (daughter in law) and his grandson Gurdeep Singh Panesar also an Electrical Engineer, who are running the family business and keeping the flag flying high.

INDER SINGH BRAR

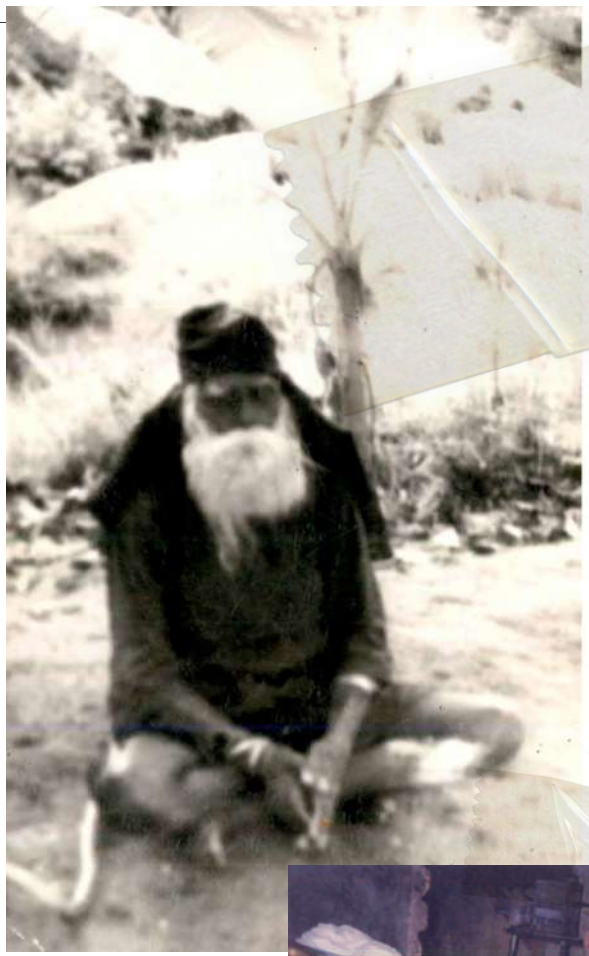
Sardar Inder Singh Brar came from Daudhar India to Kenya in 1904. Our family has had a long association with the Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. My grandfather settled in Kibos after various jobs as a farmer and was well known as the local magistrate in Kibos. He was popularly referred to as "BWANA FAINI", by the local population there. To date that name has stuck with the family. My father, Sardar Daljit Singh Brar served in various posts in the management committee of the Gurudwara. My late brother, Sardar Jatinderpal Singh Brar served as the Committee Secretary for almost 14years. My mother, Mata Mohinder Kaur served as the Vice Chairman of the Istri Sabha while my sister-in-law, Kuldeep Kaur, wife of late Sardar Jatinderpal served as a Treasurer in the 1990's. My wife, Sardarni Kamalpreet Kaur Brar, is an active member of the Istri Sabha having served as a Treasurer and Secretary until 2013. Our daughter, Gurvinder Kaur Brar taught at the Singh Sabha Nursery School for 5 years.

THE BRARS

The Brar family came to Kenya in 1898. The first person was Mr. Pratap Singh Brar. Later came in Mr. Hakam Singh Brar followed by Mr. Hazara Singh. Mr. Hakam Singh was a councillor and later became a member of parliament in the year 1932 – 1936 when Kenya was a British colony. He had 4 sons, Mr. Uttam Singh Brar, Mr. Amarjit Singh Brar, Mr. Tejpal Pal Singh Brar and Mr. Tej Prakash Singh Brar. Mr. Amarjit Singh was a Vice chairman of Singh Sabha. He was also an active member of the committee. At present the following Brar family members are still in Kenya Mr. Tejpal Singh Brar – Son of Mr. Hakan Singh Brar. He has a sugarcane farm in Miwani; Mr. Tejprakash Singh Brar – son of Mr. Hakan Singh brar. He is an achitect in Nairobi; Mr. Vicky Singh Brar – son of the late Mr. Jatinder Pal Singh Brar, grandson of the late Sradar Sawan Singh Brar. He is a sugarcane farmer and transporter; and Mr. Mawinder Singh Brar – son of the late Mr. Sawan Singh Brar. He is a sugarcane farmer and transporter.

ARISO KAUR

Aristo Kaur is a dedicated sewadars of the Gurudwara. She has adopted orphaned children and helped many needy in her life.



THE PANDHALS

By Babbi Pandhal

The Pandhals originate from Nahl Village, Tehsil Nakoda, Jalander District, India. The first person from the Pandhal's to migrate to British East Africa colony [Kenya] was Mr. Jagat Singh Pandhal, who took the long journey from Nahl to Jalander, a distance of 58km on food that took a week to complete the journey.

At Jalander, he boarded a train to Bombay [now Mumbai]. This took a week as well. In Mumbai, he worked in a hotel to earn some money. Later, he worked in a dhow and was on duty aboard dhow that was destined for Mombasa and upon reaching Mombasa in 1896; he set foot in Kenya and decided to make it his home. He set the precedent for further migration of his family members to Kenya. Upon reaching Mombasa, he was employed in the building of the Lunatic Express line [railway]. He was a surveyor and carried on with the same job for the next 6 years until the railway reached Port Florence [present day Kisumu] in 1901. When the railway line was completed, all the employees working for the British were given a choice of what they would like to do. As he was a farmer back in India, he requested for land and as a sign of gratitude for the service to the crown, the British carved out an Indian settlement scheme from Kibos railway station extending to the hills. After he was allocated the freehold land, he started land clearing and upon realizing the potential, he sent letters to his brothers in India to come to Kenya. The letter took about a month to reach India.

His brother Mr. Surain Singh came in 1904. His other brother Mr. Sawan Singh [father to Mr. Surjit Singh and Malkiat Singh] came to Kenya in 1906 upon the invitation of his brother. Mr. Sawan Singh started farming on the same land given to Mr. Jagat Singh. They were staying in a joint family unit. Initially they grew gum trees but because of lack of market, they shifted to maize.

In 1922 sugarcane was introduced in Kibos and they started its cultivation. With the introduction of sugarcane, jaggery production was also introduced. The sugarcane was crushed in rollers propelled by oxen. This was a very small scale. Initially the locals could not trust the jaggery so the elders took jaggery eating session in baraza where they would eat the jaggery first and pass it on to the locals who ate it later. This made the jaggery acceptable to the locals. Apart from farming and Jaggery production, Mr. Sawan Singh a started transportation business in which he used a fleet of 14 Ox Carts from Kisumu to Yala. From Kisumu, he would transport general goods like clothes, household items, and steel girders to Yala. There were no roads.

A typical journey would be as follows: The yard for the ox was based in Kisumu near present day KICOMI. From there, they would leave early morning at around 2am. The first stop for the Ox to rest and eat was at Kisian. After the rest there, they would proceed till Daraja Mbili where there would be another stop. From there, they proceeded till just past Maseno. Next stop was Luanda and then Yala where they would deliver the cargo. From Yala, they would bring back beans, sunflower, seseme seeds etc to Kisumu. The return journey would take 10-11 days and the business carried on for over 14 years. All the journeys were in a convoy. During stops, that convoy would form a circle. A bonefire would be lit in the middle. They slept around the bonfire and even under the ox carts. Apart from the general commodities, they also had to carry extra ox cart just in case a cart broke. If such should happen, the entire content would be off

Malkit Singh Pandhal and Surjit Singh Pandhal

loaded and then the cart would be detached from the ox. The extra ox cart would be off loaded and coupled to the ox. The general commodities would be reloaded and the broken cart would be on the transporting cart and they would carry on.

The total number of ox carts by all the transporters was 1430. A return journey would earn them between 1200-1400 Indian Rupees. One memorable trip by Mr. Sawan Singh was a trip to Mumias where they transported steel girds for bridge building. This journey took him 25 days and he earned 2,500 Indian Rupees. This bridge still stands as a monument next to the current bridge on river Nzoia. Coincidentally, it is next to SSMS Mumias yard. The brothers further added the business of oil extraction from sunflower. This was done in central Kisumu where Powerlite Electronics presently is, opposite Bon Accord House. They had seven oil extracting mills. The oil was sold locally. They further ventured into flour grinding mills powered by water from the river. They had seven mills in total. The maize was purchased locally and also from Yala where it was stored in their store. With all this hard work, they had managed to own 1400 acres of land, a store in Yala, a store and property in Kisumu.

With the growing business, relatives were invited to come from India to join the business. Among others, the following were invited - Mr. Jiwan Singh [grandfather to Mr Taranjeet Singh Padhaal]; Mr. Sadhu Singh - son of Jaimal Singh [uncle to Mr Channan Singh Chatte]; Mr. Santa Singh - son of Jaimal Singh [father to to Mr Channan Singh Chatte]; Mr. Phuman Singh [from Noopur village]; Mr. Ratan Singh [from Noopur Village]; Mr. Mangal Singh [from Noopur village]; Mr. Santa Singh Lal Singh [grandfather to Mr. Rony Singh Pandhal]; Mr. Jhanda Singh [father to the late Mukhtair Singh and grandfather to Surinder Singh Khera & Parminder Singh Khera]; Mr. Harban Singh; and Narain Singh.

Later in 1939, everyone split and property was divided according to their shares. Mr. Sawan Singh Pandhal got a farm in Miwani, a farm in Nyangeta and with that he carried on farming. He first invited two of his older sons, Mr Mohinder Singh Pandhal who came in 1948 and Mr. Joginder Singh Pandhal who came in 1950. They assisted in the farming. Mr. Surjit Singh Pandhal and Mr. Malkiat Singh Pandhal then followed in 1953. They also joined their family business of sugarcane farming.

Mr. Joginder Singh Pandhal migrated to UK in 1952 while Mr. Mohinder Singh Pandhal migrated to India in 1960. Mr. Surjit Singh Pandhal and Mr. Malkiat Singh Pandhal carried on with the business and to date they have expanded it further. In the Sabha, Mr. Surjit Singh was the Chairman from 1981-1983 and later from 1993-1995. As Chairman, he initiated the building Siri Guru Singh Sabha (SSGS) Nursery School. Funds were collected through organization of charity walks and general contributions.

When his first term ended, he was appointed as the Dispensary Manager and while there, he initiated the setting up of the laboratory and also got a Doctor and Lab Technician to run the dispensary. In his second term as Chairman, the Ladies Langar hall and kitchen were totally refurbished in 1993.

Mr. Bhalvinder Singh Pandhal was also a member of committees serving in various positions as an Assistant Treasurer, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary, Secretary, Vice Chairman and Chairman. Under his tenure, the school was refurbished, the gents Langar Hall was refurbished. Mr. Prithpal Singh has also served the Sabha as an Assistant Treasurer and now a Committee Member. Mrs. Gurmej Kaur Pandhal has also served the Sabha as an active member of Ishtri Sabha and was the Chairlady on two occasions during the last tenure being from 2011 to 2013. The family has contributed in various ways to the Sabha among others the building of the Dharshani Dheri

GUNDARA

Harpreet Kaur Gundara (Happy)

My grandfather the late Sardar Mohinder Singh Gundara ("Babaji") got married to my grandmother the late Sardarni Harbans Kaur Gundara, whom we called "Mamadogo" in Punjab, India in 1950. They moved to Kenya from India in 1954 where they settled in Nyeri with my great grandfather, the late S. Atma Singh Gundara who worked there as a forest officer.

They had two sons, my father Travinder Singh (Tinde) and my chachaji Inderjit Singh (Jeethe). My chachaji unfortunately passed away at the tender young age of 18 from muscle disorder and my father studied at Kisumu Boys High School and went on to qualify as a Civil Engineer from Middlesex University, the UK. My grandparents moved to Kericho in 1965 where my Babaji started working for East Africa (Kenya) Power Lighting Co and where he years later retired from, having worked his whole working life there and having adopted the pet name of "Power". They moved to Kisumu in 1968 and settled in Milimani. My father after returning to Kisumu from his studies in England in 1978, married my mother Ravinder Kaur (Binde), daughter of Mr Channan Singh Chatthe of Kibos. They were married in Kibos in December, 1980. My parents travelled around Kenya with my father's job and had my sister, Jasmeen in June 1982 and I, Harpreet (Happy) was born in May 1984. My father Tinde was an active community member holding the post of Gen. Secretary of the Kisumu Simba Club, the Lions Club Rural and the Nyanza Motorsports Club.

He was renown in the rally field where he navigated with my Mamaji, Satwant Singh Chatthe in numerous car rally's. He was a keen hockey and squash player and with my mother enjoyed socialising and had a great social and community life in Kisumu.

My father very sadly passed away in a tragic car accident on 23 August 1987, in a horrific tragedy where we lost 5 family members in total including my Naniji, 2 mamiji's and my sister Avneet. My mum, my sister, my brother Jassi and myself were all involved in the car accident and with the blessings of the almighty recovered personally and as a family became closer than ever!

My grandparents, my mum and my nanaji and the rest of the family with their faith in God continued to serve Siri Guru Singh Sabha (SGSS) Gurdwara Kisumu which became an integral part of our daily lives. My Babaji was a very active committee member throughout his life in Kisumu. He was also an active member in the Sikh community and throughout his life played an enormous role in developing the Kisumu Simba Club and carrying out building developments to the SGSS Gurdwara Kisumu. My grandmother, Mamadogo was also an active member of the ladies committee (Istri Sabha) of the Gurdwara where she developed the ladies satsung to be held weekly at the Gurdwara and was a keen social worker where she organised charity donations for the less fortunate and would regularly take food and clothing for the homeless and the street kids. She was very fond of providing sewa to the giani ji's and was a respected lady member of the managing committee of the Gurdwara.

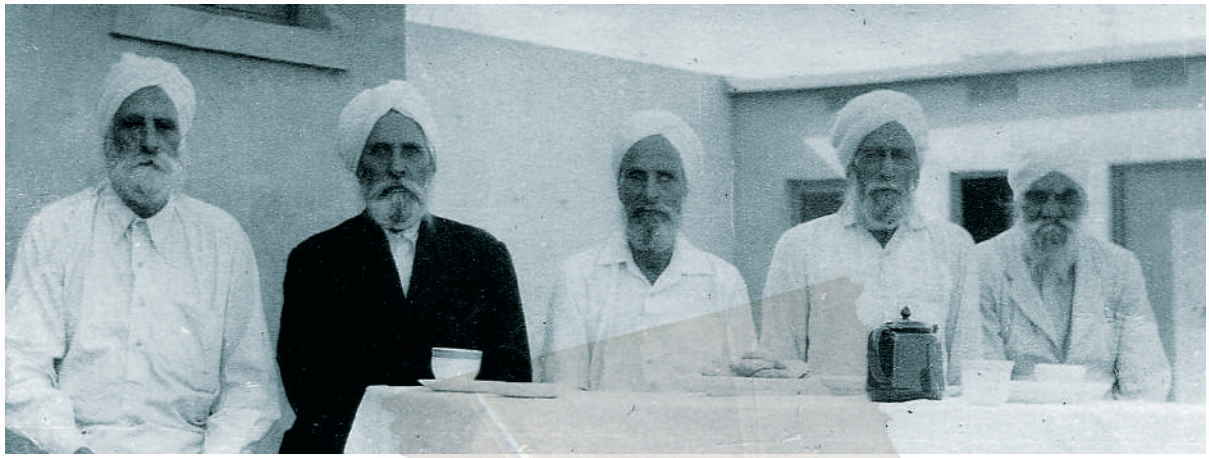
My mum, Binde also dedicated her time and services to the Gurdwara and developed the kitchen, the stores, the utensils and crockery and the wedding hall to allow wedding lunches to be held lavishly and comfortably at the Gurdwara. She was an active member of the Istri Sabha throughout her life in Kisumu and organised various trips for us kids to represent SGSS Kisumu at various symposiums and Sikh Youth Camps held all over Kenya. A personal favourite memory of mine is our trip to Nyeri where we represented SGSS Kisumu at the 10th Sikh Youth Camp in Nyeri, in 1994 with my cousins and other children from the community, winning numerous awards for the Gurdwara. My sister and I played kirtan at many functions of the Gurdwara and enjoyed doing sewa . My mum has beautiful memories of and from SGSS Gurdwara Kisumu, where she firmly believes her faith in God and her love for sewa developed from.

My grandparents moved to Moga, India in 2002 where our beloved Mamadogo sadly passed away in March 2008 and with my Babaji passing away last year in May 2013. Their memories and spiritual guidance will live with us forever. My mum moved to the UK in 1998 for me and my sister's further studies. With my beloved nanaji and mamaji's support and God's blessings, Jasmeen went onto qualify as a dentist and now owns her own dental practices with her husband, Dr. Hardeep Basra, whilst I qualified as a Solicitor and work as a Commercial Litigation Lawyer for a large city law firm in London.

Our family's legacy to SGSS Gurdwara Kisumu continues on with the Gurdwara having given us many fond memories. I am humbled and privileged to have belonged to, grown up with and carried out sewa at this great institution which we like to call our Harmandhar Sahib in Kisumu and am thankful to the almighty for an amazing family which with their faith in God, has also instilled in me the same morals and values to date.

On behalf of my family, I would like to wish the Gurdwara SGSS Kisumu a very Happy 100th Birthday and convey my heartfelt congratulations to the Gurdwara's respected committee members and to the widespread members of this Gurdwara's Sikh community worldwide.

KALLA SINGH & KISHEN SINGH



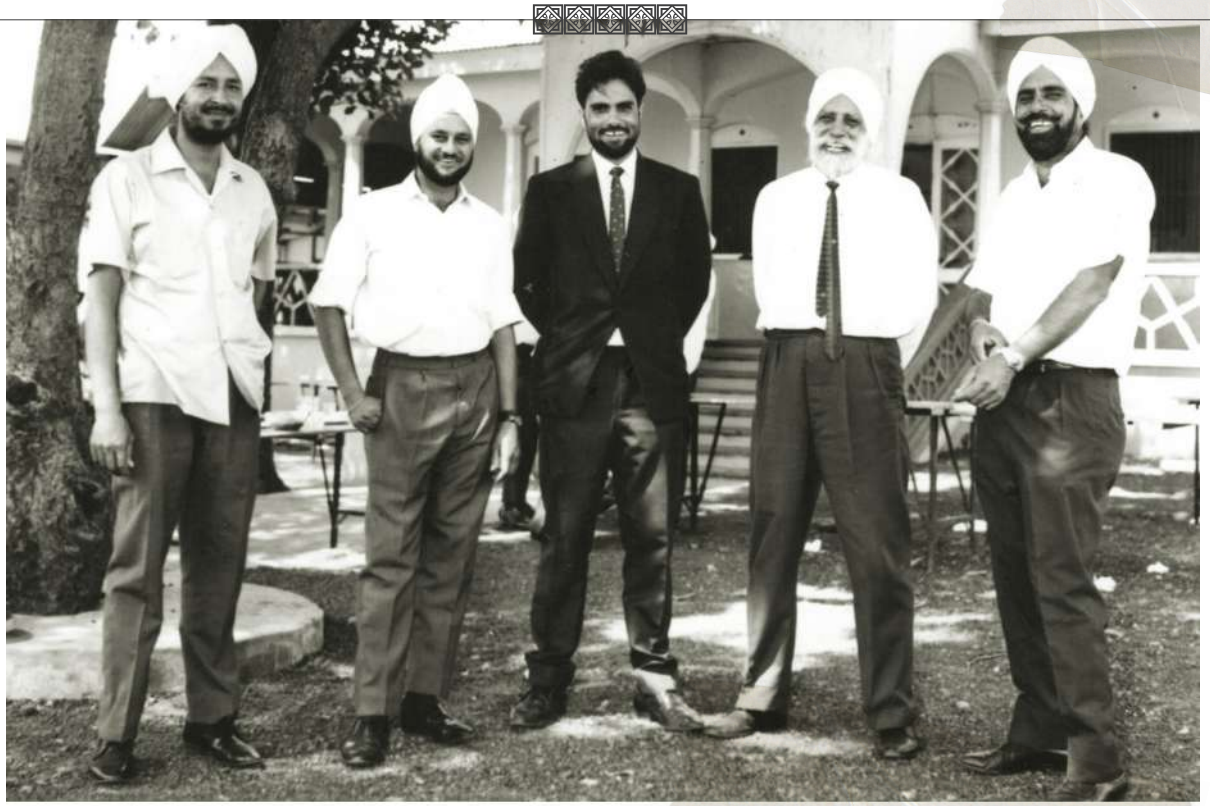
Kalla Singh Sidhu, Inder Singh Brar, Kishen Singh Sidhu, Bishen Singh Sidhu and Hazara Singh Brar

HISTORY OF JAGIR SINGH SIDHU

There were two brothers Kala Singh Sidhu and Kishen Singh Sidhu. They travelled from Porbandar in Gujrat to come to Kenya in 1907. They were both born in village Dhaudhar District Ferozepur Punjab. They travelled using a sail ship which took them roughly a month to get to Mombasa Kenya.

They later arrived in Kisumu where they started assembling fuel tanks and ships that pitied the waters of Lake Victoria and also transported goods to nearby towns and villages by ox-cart. They bought 25 acres of land in Kibos, cleared it with oxen and planted sugarcane to make it into Jaggery. Gradually, they introduced mechanization and through resourcefulness and enterprise the family expanded the farm to 1300 acres. Kala Singh married Kishen Kaur and the couple had four sons and two daughters.

Jagir Singh married to Dalip Kaur; Surjeet Singh to Rajinder Kaur; Harjeet Singh to Harpal Kaur; Ranjit Singh to Sukhvir Kaur; Bachan Kaur Sandhu to Bachitar Singh; and Ratan Kaur Gill to Singh. Kishen Singh Sidhu had 2 sons and 1 daughter - Balbir Singh Sidhu, Harbachan Singh Sidhu and Jagir Kaur Sidhu. They all lived as one family and helped their parents with the family business. The family business became a very successful enterprise enabling the family to expand their farming business and buy properties. In 1963 the family bought a wheat farm in the "white highlands" and Jagir Singh and Dalip Kaur moved to Eldoret to run the farm. Today the farm (Elgeyo Border Wheat Farms) is run by the late Jagir Singh's two sons Nirmal and Raghbir Singh Sidhu.



Balbir Singh, Tejprakash Singh Brar, Ranjit Singh, Pritam Singh Mangat and Jagir Singh Sidhu.

Santa Singh, Naranjan Singh and Jagir Singh Sidhu

MOOL SINGH SANDHU

Balbir Singh Sandhu (son)

Born in 1901, Mr. Mool Singh Sandhu received basic education that enabled him to read and write in English, Urdu and Punjabi. He joined the Army during the 1st World War and served for only two years before the war ended. He was popular with Army Officers because he could speak English. Around 1923-24, an English Army Officer, who was his friend, came to Africa for big game hunting and brought my father with him. They went to Mbarara in Uganda for game hunting. When the Army officer missed his target shots for a lion or an elephant, and my father killed the animal, the trophy still went to the English man. There after my father remained in Mbarara and got into business of arranging hunting Safaris, which was a popular sport. He also assisted his clients to get trophies. My elder sister and I were born in India sometime in 1936. My father came to Africa with my mother, Gurbachan Kaur but my grandmother refused to allow my father to take us along. She told my father that it would not be wise to take two young babies to a strange country.

During that period, most employment opportunities were found in mines. My father ended up working in many mines and at one time, he was the best Gold Reef Finder in East Africa. He acquired his skills from his Hindu Punjabi friend and as a team; their services were on high demand in many places in Tanzania. At one time, he worked at Macalder Mines with Bukam Singh, Maya Singh Sandhu. His last employment was at Roster Mines in Kakamega, which was later closed down. He settled in Kisumu, which was the closest big town. He was appointed a Librarian in Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. During the 2nd World War, most Singhs and some Hindus used to get together at Gurudwara Library every evening to discuss issues and listen to war news on Radio. Later, he served as the President for Gurudwara. He also took turns for Akhand Paths reciting. He was a regular at morning prayers, and Sukhmani Sahib Paths which were performed every day without Gudka. He was the first President of Sikh Union and oversaw sports competition at Sikh Union Grounds. Volleyball was the only game that was played by Asians. The teams that took part were invited from Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret towns. Eldoret took the trophy.

I have been a committee member for years, served as School Secretary with Milwant Singh Sandhu, Assistant Secretary and Treasure with Mr. Ranjit Singh Brah. My mother Gurbachan Kaur served as a Ladies Chairperson for many years in the 1960's. My brother Raghbir Singh Sandhu and I run a successful furniture business and our younger brother Vijay Singh Sandhu is a successful architect.

THE LOCHABS

By Amarjit Singh Banwaitt

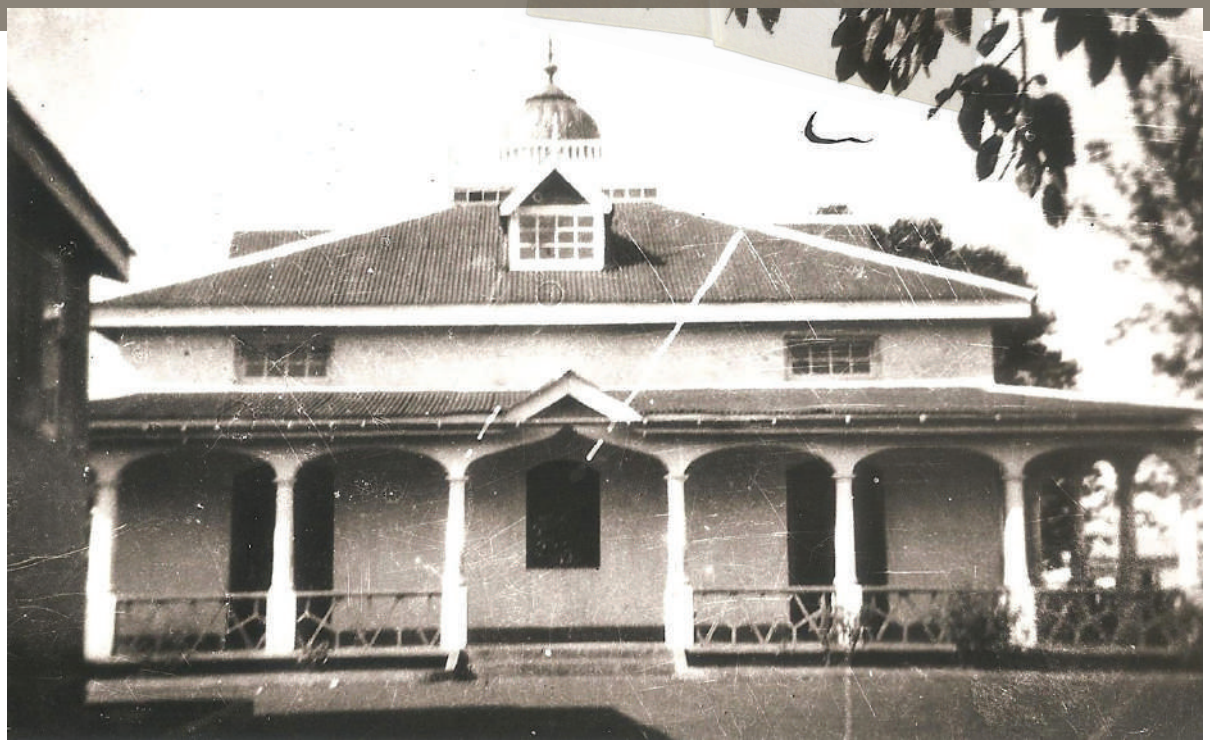
The Lochabs are one of the illustrious families among the pioneer settlers of Eldoret from India whose family history dates back to 1887, when the pioneer, Hira Singh Lochab came from Ishapur, Punjab, to make a fortune in Kenya. His sonGhumand Singh Lochab joined the Marine Department of East African Railways & Harbour. He joined in Kisumu and was operating in the region of Lake Victoria, Lake Kyoga and Lake Albert. At that time, Kenya was the HQ of the East African Community and it was difficult to get a technical job under the colonial system and by dint of his hard work and dedication, he rose to the position of 2nd Engineer, which was generally reserved for the British. He worked for the Railways in Uganda and Kenya till 1939, and started a Saw Mill in partnership at Kaptagat.

Ghumand Singh and Dhan Kaur had 6 sons and 3 daughters – Naranjan Singh (born in Masindi, Uganda); Hardial Singh (Kisumu, Kenya); Amarjit Singh (Kisumu, Kenya); Narinder Singh (Eldoret, Kenya); Ranjit Singh (Eldoret, Kenya); Avtar Singh (Eldoret, Kenya); Kulwant Kaur Deol (Uganda); Rajinder Kaur Gill (Eldoret, Kenya); and Marjit Kaur Baryan (Eldoret, Kenya). Ghumand Singh came to Eldoret in 1939 and started the transport business and acquired a quarry in 1952 when his son Naranjan Sing joined him. He bought a Farm at Eldoret after the Independence of Kenya. Ghumand was the founder member of Sikh Union Club, started in 1954 and took lots of interest in the social and community work. He was an active member in SGSS, Kisumu and Eldoret. He was the Trustee SGSS, Eldoret since inception to 1966. The transport business proved to be the life line for the family business of Lochabs. After the demise of Ghumand Singh in 1966, the sons went into partnership to form Lochab Bros, wherein all the brothers became equal partners in this business with six trucks. From a single Pick-up in 1941, the business has grown to a commendable position operating in and around Kenya, hauling goods and containers over long distances across and beyonf East Africa. Lochab trucks carrying logs for Pan African paper Mills and Kenya Power & Lighting and Petroleum tankers in Kenya is a common sight. The dynamic vision of the Lochabs diversified their transport activities to Agriculture, Horticulture and Manufacturing industries. Lochabs name is quite famous in Motor Rally scene, when 1971, they started competing in small rallies with Narinder as the Driver, and Amarjit as the Navigator. Soon other brothers Hardial and Ranjit Singh took interest. In 1982, serviced by the family team, and led by Hardial, they competed in the World Class Safari Rally, an international event mostly participated by the foreign professionals. In their first attempt, they were placed in 10th overall and awarded the 'Best Local Crew' trophy. Ever since, the Lochabs have won many local rallies, and still hold the record for 'Flourspar Best Hill Climbing' in Kenya.

Mata Dhan Kaur was associated with various religious and Philanthropic work, laid the foundation stone of the 'Gulab Lochab Academy' which is acclaimed today as one of the outstanding schools in Kenya. She also took keen interest in the extension of the Gurudwara with a hall and flats, and was connected with various donation works.

EDITORIAL

This Collection of Memoirs has brought forth a moving story of the events leading to the foundation laying and building of a Gurudwara in Kisumu.



It has offered a glimpse of some of the historical events spanning 100 years from the foundation laying of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu to date. It provides valuable information through short stories of the first settlers, which coincides with celebrating our being in Kenya at a time when the country is celebrating 50 years of independence.

The Collection of Memoirs is not entirely focused on telling a progressive story of the Gurudwara, its institutions and the progress of Nyanza Sikhs every 10 years, but we have attempted to capture as much information as possible in a short time. Consequently, we have relied on a wide spectrum of information provided entirely by familes and any inacuracies that may arise were not intended. While the final product may not be perfect, it lays a firm foundation for future perfection. This work can be enhanced through further research to capture as much information as possible for a more detailed book on this subject. Just like the founding fathers of Siri Guru Singh Sabha (Didar Singh, first Chairman, Waryam Singh, Secretary and Nihal Singh, Treasurer) all played a fundamental part in planning and wanted a 'proper' ceremony big enough for their times. Invitations were sent to Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike, not just in Kisumu but all major towns in East Africa and overseas for the splendid foundation laying ceremony held on 21 December 1913.

20 saturday magazine

December 21, 2013 SATURDAY NATION

TRAVEL&LEISURE

Rupi Mangat goes back to the time when Sikhs came together to witness the laying of the foundation stone for a new temple in Kisumu

The Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu (Sikh temple)

Centennial celebrations

Exactly a hundred years ago today, an assorted group of Sikhs: Men, women and children from the then British East African Protectorate, came together with the Nyanza Sikhs in Kisumu to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone for the new gurdwara, the Punjabi word meaning "house of God".

The simple whitewashed gurdwara still stands on Mosque Road by the town clock in its original form save for the roof which had to be replaced because it was leaking beyond repair. As children we ran around the verandah of the temple, sat in for prayers, and hid behind the mango and jack fruit trees while playing hide-and-seek, totally oblivious of what it took for our ancestors to build this iconic temple. The book of minutes for Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu, dated 19 November 1910 -1916 provides a fascinating glimpse into the past of this fledgling community in a new land.

The pioneering Sikhs arrived on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kisumu in 1901, having built the Uganda Railway alongside Muslim and Hindu workers. They were a hardy lot who had survived the bone-crushing work of clearing the ground for laying the railway sleepers, survived the inhospitable and waterless Taru Desert, the man-eaters of Tsavo, malaria and black water fever, the cold and rain that poured through their tattered tents, and at times thirst and hunger when provisions ran low.

Building the temple

By 1900, the British had established Kisumu as the district headquarters with provincial offices. The harbour was in place with facilities for sea planes to land, but money was always short. In the book of minutes there is an entry by Waryan Singh, the first secretary of the committee, about the journey to Yala, 40 kilometres west of Kisumu, to raise funds for the new gurdwara from the Indian community there. It reads as follows:

The Yala Trip — 22.2.1913. "We left on Friday night by moonlight.... Didar Singh and I went on bicycles and the others on donkeys. Ten miles from Kisumu, Didar Singh's bicycle broke down. We had to walk the rest of the way with him pushing the bike. The meh arrived in Luanda at 4am, seven miles short of Yala and slept there. At 7.30 in the morning, they began walking to Yala to reach by 9am. It rained the whole day.

"At 5pm we congregated at Isher Bishen Das's shop and made an appeal for the new gurdwara. We got a lot of donations. Seth Alidina donated 140 rupees," wrote Waryan Singh.

"At 10am on 21st December 1913, Sardar Attar Singh, the Permanent Way Inspector from Mackinnon Station, laid the foundation stone. On top of the foundation stone, he placed a glass vase which contained one silk *keshera* (shorts), one wooden *kanga* (comb), one *kirpan* (sword), one *kada* (Sikh steel bangle), and one note in each of the following languages — Gurmukhi, Kiswahili, Urdu, and English written on good heavy paper (copies were placed in a file). The shorts, comb, sword, and steel bangle and unshaved hair are the 5 Ks of the Sikhs.

"The notes in the glass vase read: "*Ek Onar Sat Gur Parsad* (God is one and he can be realised by the grace of the true Guru.)

"The Sikhs of this place having felt the great urgency of a permanent place of worship of their own in Kisumu have striven during the year to raise a somewhat substantial monument of the Sikh religion in this place and by the grace of the gurus the foundation of the gurdwara (Sikh church) has been laid today by Bhai Attar Singh, Permanent Way Inspector of the Uganda Railway, in the presence of nearly all the Sikh residents of the Nyanza Province and the leading members of all the other communities of Kisumu.

"The building plot is secured from the government on lease for a term of 99 years in the name of the Chief Khalsa Diwan of Punjab.

"Dated this 21st day of December 1913."

In the end, the construction cost 15,000 rupees with equal sums donated by the Sikhs, Muslim, and Hindu communities. Meanwhile the Sikhs are preparing for centennial celebrations for this iconic temple on the shores of Africa's largest lake in January 2014.

"This gurdwara is a super-structure built of concrete. It will stand for another 100 years," comments Charanjeet Singh Heyer, the present chairman of Siri Guru Singh Sabha. The gurdwara and the celebrations are open to all.

AT THE LAKESIDE

Kisumu is 350 kilometres west of Nairobi. You can stay at Kiboko Bay Resort (www.kibokobay.com) or Jambo Impala Eco Lodge (www.impalaecolodge.com) on the shores of Lake Victoria and explore the lake with its many islands. You may also want to visit Kit-Mikayi, Bande, Rusinga, Ndere Island, Rusinga, and many more sites around the lake.

Send your feedback to satmag@ke.nationmedia.com

4 Lifestyle

Sunday January 19, 2014 SUNDAY NATION

From Punjab to the shores of Lake

The colonial masters shipped the Indians to Mombasa to construct the railway from the 1890s and, upon completion of the task, many settled in the lakeside town and built a community around Sikhism complete with a temple that is now 100 years old

BY ELVIS ONDIEKI

Master Amarjit Singh plays outside a Kisumu temple oblivious of wherever else in the world he is. He is totally at home here, no worries, no cares.

The boy is well-groomed, perhaps a testimony to his roots as an offspring of a financially stable family. His parents are spending a few months away, chatting with friends.

Master Amarjit is part of the fourth generation of Sikhs in Kisumu. His great-grandfather was shipped from India by British colonialists to build the Kenya-Uganda railway in the 1890s.

The Siri Guru Sikh Temple on Mosque Road, outside which young Amarjit's small feet are trampling as he leaves about to set intrepid part of Kisumu Sikhs' history. Next month they will celebrate the centenary of their place of worship that is considered a landmark in the lakeside town.

Writing in the Nation last month, Ms Rupi Mangat said "The simple whitewashed gurdwara, (house of worship) still stands ... in its original form save for the roof which had to be replaced because it was leaking beyond repair".

Quoting from the records written between 1910 and 1916, the article noted: "At 10 am on 21st December 1913, Sardar Attar Singh, the Permanent Way Inspector from Mackinnon Station, laid the foundation stone. On top of the foundation stone, he placed a glass vase which contained one silk kesheera (shorts), one wooden kanga (comb), one kirpan (sword), one kada (Sikh steel bangle), and one note in each of the following languages — Gurmukhi, Kiswahili, Urdu and English written on good heavy paper (copies were placed in a file).

"The shorts, comb, sword and steel bangle and unshaved hair are the 5 Ks of the Sikhs".

Today, behind the exchange of pleasantries outside the temple after worship and lunch, lies a story of a people who have survived many odds to build an empire in Kisumu. They had to battle diseases, beasts and harsh weather besides the hard labour as their way to the lakeside town. Many of their kin perish didn't survive the rigours of building the railway in a strange land thousands of miles from home.

Ms Mangat in her Saturday Nation article titled: "A Hint of Asian Cultures in Kenya, says the earliest batch of 350 Sikhs was brought to Kenya by the British in 1896 to police the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. Another 350 were brought in later that year and 300 more in 1898. They came in along with the Muslim Punjabi.

But the construction was not without its casualties. Records with the Kisumu Sikhs indicate that 2,500 people of Indian descent lost their lives in the duration of the construction. Of these, 28 were devoured by the famous man-eaters of Tsavo, which have been the subject of many films, including the 1996 film *The Ghost and the Darkness*.

"We are proud that a good number of our fathers survived the harsh conditions then. Physical fitness is one of the misunderstanders of Sikhism," says Mr Charanjeet Singh Heyer, the chairman of the Kisumu Siri Guru Temple.

The first Sikhs are thought to have arrived in Kisumu in 1902. After the completion of the railway, the Sikhs that settled in the lakeside town met another challenge: opening up farmland for use in the region.

Mr Heyer says the colonial government gave land to the Sikh community for sugarcane farming at Kisumu's Kibos area.

"It was, however, a great challenge clearing up the bushy tracts of land, but thanks to our fathers' resilience, the farms were soon ready good one of" he says in his book.

But more challenges were to come in the form of a post-colonial government policy that proved to be a hurdle to the prosperity of the Sikhs.

Mr Ashen Khan, a nominated member of the Kisumu county assembly, says the government implemented a policy that forced many Sikhs and other people of Asian descent to leave the property they had developed in rural areas.

"In 1967, the government created a policy of Africanising villages. Most of the Asians who had businesses in rural areas had to move to urban areas. The policy also forced many Asians to develop a fondness with agriculture, a great challenge to the majority of them descent," says Mr Khan. He, however, is not a Sikh.

The politician explains that non-Kenyans were benefited to increasing discrimination by the ruling government. For example, Sikhs and other Asians in the civil service were sacked in favour of Africans. The Kenyan Immigration Act

Mr Mohammed Ashen Khan is one of the Kenyan-Asians living in Kisumu who have embraced politics. He is a nominated member of the county assembly of Kisumu.

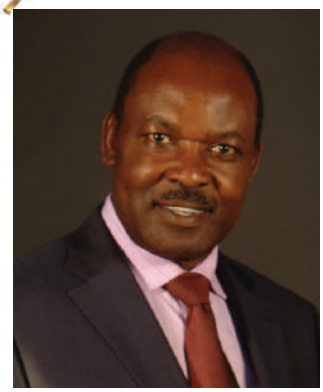
"TO ME, THE NICKNAME KALASINGA IS A SHOW OF HOW KENYANS WERE RECEPTIVE OF THE SIKHS AND OTHER ASIANS IN THOSE EARLY DAYS," Ms Kiran Heyer

The commemorative milestone of Siri Gurudwara Singh Sabha was reported in Kenya's leading newspaper 'Daily Nation'. One article was written by our very own roving Kenyan Sikh journalist Rupi Mangat.

The current Sabha members, who have been inspired by their moving story of events leading to laying the foundation stone, hope to make the current celebration another 'splendid 'occasion, a memorable event to remember our fore fathers and rejoice their historic efforts. They left an invaluable treasure for the entire community to pray and remember the almighty together in the 'house of God' our Gurudwara Siri Guri Singh Sabha, Kisumu. A date was finally set for 26th February to 9th March 2014 marking the centennial celebrations with a series of five Akhand Paths, Kathas, Kirtans by various Jatha's, Nagar Kirtan, charitable distributions and other religious activities for the youth. By the time this book will be in circulation during the proposed function, hopefully you will be witness to write your own story on the celebrations and keep the 'spirit alive 'in inspiring another story to be told in the future.

On 21st December 2013 with the few sangat present there was Kirtan Diwan 9.00 am to 10.00 am at the Gurudwara. Following ardas the sangat gathered in the langar hall did chaupai sahib Path and a small cake was cut to commemorate the actual centennial day to the laying of the foundation stone. After this the sangat had a simple meal of pakoras, barfi and tea.

MESSAGES



H.E. Jack Ranguma

Governor – Kisumu

On behalf of all residents of Kisumu, I take pleasure in conveying my congratulations to the Sikh Community on the Centennial Celebrations of the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu. As you celebrate the 100 years of exceptional pioneering spirit, I want to note with gratitude your remarkable contribution to the growth of the economy of this region. The Sikh community are reported to have arrived in this region a century ago. Since then, you have successfully built a community that is entrepreneurial, successful and involved in all facets of Kenyan living. This is evidenced by their contribution towards the tremendous growth of Kisumu City. Your peaceful stay and coexistence with other residents of Kisumu is a continued testament of our city's haven for investment. Ours is truly a melting pot where everyone has a chance. I once more congratulate you as you celebrate this momentous occasion.

Sibabrata Tripathi

High Commissioner of India to Kenya

It gives me immense pleasure to be able to send my good wishes to the Chairman and Committee member sof Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu, on the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha and on the eve of the commencement of celebrations to mark this auspicious occasion. The Sikh community in Kenya has done much for the development of the Republic of Kenya and its association with the growth og the City of Kisumu and its surroundings is a matter of record. The community has left its idelible imprint on agriculture and industry in the region. It has contributed in great mesaure to social development, as well, through acts of philanthropy. I wish the commemorative celebrations every success.

Bhai Kulwant Singh

Jathedar, Takhat Sachkand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh. With divine blessings of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj, and the Sikh Sangat of Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abachalnagar Sahib, Nanded, send our heartiest greetings and good wishes to all the Sadh Sangat of Kisumu, Kenya on this grand occasion of Centennial Celebrations of the foundation stone laying ceremony of this prestigious holy shrine of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu. 'Sabh Sikhan Ko Hukam Hai Guru Manio Granth', our Dasmesh Pita left us with this holy sermon and indeed Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is our living enlightenment to truthful living for 'Sarbat Da Bhalla'. May the grace of Guru Nanak Dev Ji be ever with the Sikh Sangat. We wish the community Chardikala and in your spiritual and divine seva for the welfare and benefit of the Kenyan community. Congratulations for the milestone celebrations.

Hon Shakeel Shabbir Ahmed

MP Kisumu East

I wish to congratulate the Sikh Community on the occasion of then Centennial anniversary of the building of the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Kisumu City. The Sikh Community had always been an integrally important and core part of the overall Punjabi Community which has played a critical role in bringing the Railway to Kisumu and true to their spirit of hard work, dedication, loyalty and pioneering, anchored upon the foundation of Sikh religion and its pillars as propounded by Guru Nanak, the Sikh community has true hard work developed what were mosquito ridden swamp and lands between Kibos and Chemelil which were considered by the British colonists as waste lands into a vibrant sugar farms and taken this further by building a sugar factory (Kibos Sugar). The Kisumu Sikh Community has played a major and critical role in the development of Kisumu City from the small railway spot to the Kisumu City we enjoy now. As the first Mayor of Kisumu of Asian extract and later as the Member of Parliament now re- elected for the second term I haven enjoyed the unlimited support of the Sikh community who have expressed their love and pride in me and treated me as their son and brother. My late father Dr Shabbir Ahmed also enjoyed the love and support of the Kisumu Sikh community who considered my family as one of their own.

Hon. Sunjeev Kaur Birdi

Member of Parliament

I wish to express my heartiest congratulations to the citizens of Kisumu and the Sikh community on the Centennial Celebrations of the Siri Guru Singh Sabha. It is with pride that I stand as a Sikh in the Parliament of Kenya and represent the people of the country. My journey started with the blessings of the Almighty, of Guru Nanak Devji and of my family. I am grateful to the community for their support and to the greater community, the people of the Nation who stood by me through the tough and good times. Siri Guru Singh Sabha's 100th Birthday symbolizes the early settlement of the Sikhs who were brought to this land for the construction of the railway by the British and then spread out across creating business opportunities and advancement for the country. This temple or as we Sikhs call it, Gurudwara, is not only the home of God but a historical expression of our roots in East Africa and the 3rd city of Kenya. Kisumu city has continued to progress in terms of social and economic development and withstood the brunt of the Post-Elections violence of 2007-2008. It is that time that brought the residents closer and today they all stand tall as an example of the humanity that lies in every Kenyan, I am proud. The role that I have in the Government is that of representation of the People of Kenya and to ensure that their wishes and rights are protected. As a Member of Parliament it is within my reach to play a major role in the decision making of the governance, which has a direct impact on the future of Kenya. May God Bless You, May the Blessings of Babaji continue to shower on Siri Guru Singh Sabha and May God Bless Kenya.

Tejpal Singh Lochab

Chairman, Sikh Supreme Council

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh. It has given me great pleasure that your Gurudwara are celebrating completion of 100 years of religious service to the Sikh community residing in Kisumu and rest of Kenya. The first Sikhs arrived in Kisumu in the process of completion of the Railway line. They have made their contribution to the process of the development of the Railway as technicians, as labourers and also participated in administrative works. After completion of the Railway in 1903, some of the staff decided to settle in Kisumu areas. They were joined later by Sikhs serving in British Army during World War I and also as professionals, farmers and business persons and others. In the last 100 years the Sikh community have contributed to the development of sugar industries and also other commercial technical and industrial services in Kenya. Despite all the vicissitudes of settlement in a new country, the community have maintained their dedication to the tenets of Sikhism and their cultural traditions. They have achieved great success in their endeavours. On this auspicious occasion, firstly to pay homage to our forefathers who had the vision to establish the Gurudwara Sahib and ensure that following generations can flourish guided by the etachings of Guru Granth Sahib Ji. in addition, our thanks and congratulations are due to the management and Sangat of the Gurudwara Sahib on his happy occasion. During the last 100 years the descendants of the Kisumu sangat have settled in various parts of East Africa and overseas. Wherever they are staying, the are inspired by blessings from Kisumu. Please accept our heartiest congratulations and Good Wishes on behaldf of the Sikh Supreme Council of Kenya. Maythe Kisumu Sikh Sangat remain in Charidkala forever.

Munira Gilani

President, Aga Khan Council for Kisumu

Sat Sri Akal. On behalf of the Ismaili Community of Kisumu, I am honoured to convey sincere congratulations to the Sikh Community on the Centennial Celebrations of the Siri Guru Singh Sabha Kisumu, which is celebrating 100 years of exceptional pioneering spirt. Settlers persevered against great odds to build a community that is entrepreneurial, sucessful and involved in all facets of Kenyan living. This is evident by the Community's contribution towards the tremendous growth of Kisumu City. Under the leadership and guidance of the Iman the Ismail Community has established schools, hospitals, health centers hosuing societies and a variety of social and economics development institutions for the common good of all the citizens regardless of their race or religion. The Ismailis have supported and have been associated with this temple ever since its inception and were involved in its construction. We look forward to maintaining and fostering our spirit of brotherhood and co-operation with the Sikh Community for the generations to come. The Ismailis join you in celebrating this momentous anniversary of a truly vibrant community.

Satwant Singh Dhanjal

Chairman, Ramgarhia Sikh Sabha, Kisumu

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh. It is my proud previlege to convey greetings and best wishes on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Kisumu. In celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of laying the foundation stone of Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha. This historical dimension of this event cannot be overlooked. We must remember the many committed Sikh families who were involved in the project which itself is a monument in the centre of Kisumu City. The Sikhs first arrived in Kisumun in 1901 and were mainly working on the Kenya-Uganda railway line. This an opportunity to recognise and record their sacrifice. Wherever the Sikhs have settled the world over setting up a Gurudwara was a priority and Kisumu was no exception. I take this moment to congratulate the entire Sikh community on this joyous occasion. It is indeed a proud moment for all. Best wishes and support for all the programme organised for the celebrations.

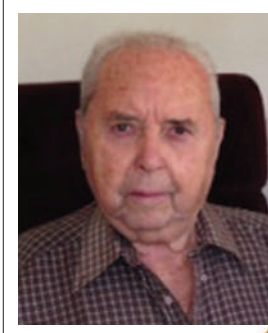
Naresh R Patel

Hindu Council of Kenya – Kisumu

Thank you very much for the invitation delivering the message of goodwill and cheer to the citizens of Kisumu and the city leaders. My hearty congratulation to Gurudwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha and to the community for commemorating 100 years of its existence. During your celebrations, it is great to see your willingness to help others by organising charity, medical camps and other various activities especially for the less fortunate. We have great pleasure in joining with the community in celebrating 100 years of existence of the beautiful Siri Guru Singh Sabha Temple. Today the Gurudwara is more than just a building but a sacred place with a long history of holiness, community and family. The oldest and largest building of its kind in Kisumu, the Siri Guru Singh Sabha, is a testament to the pride, vision and commitment to the community. Your community and this temple play a key role and add to the rich cultural tapestry of the place and make us who we are. It is my ardent desire to see you chronicle the events that have happened in Kisumu from the earliest days the Sikhs landed here till the present times. A publication containing this together with the history of the Gurudwara should be presented to the public so that everyone can appreciate the contribution of the Sikhs to the country. Daxa and I take this accasion to express our delight and eagerly anticipate joining you and the entire community in celebrating this joyous event. I am sure your faith will see you through.

Normal Brooks

MBS



I have known or have been associated with the Sikh Community for the past 70 years. It is a community that I strongly respect and admire for all the good work they do for the country they live in, wherever they are. Some of the best Engineers and Engineering Contractors are from the Sikh community. They are highly respected for their honesty and reliability.

DEDICATED TO ALL KENYANS. GOD BLESS KENYA!

WE HONOUR KENYA'S FOUNDING PRESIDENTS

Mzee Jomo Kenyatta
1963-1978

Daniel arap Moi
1978-2002

Mwai Kibaki
2002-2013

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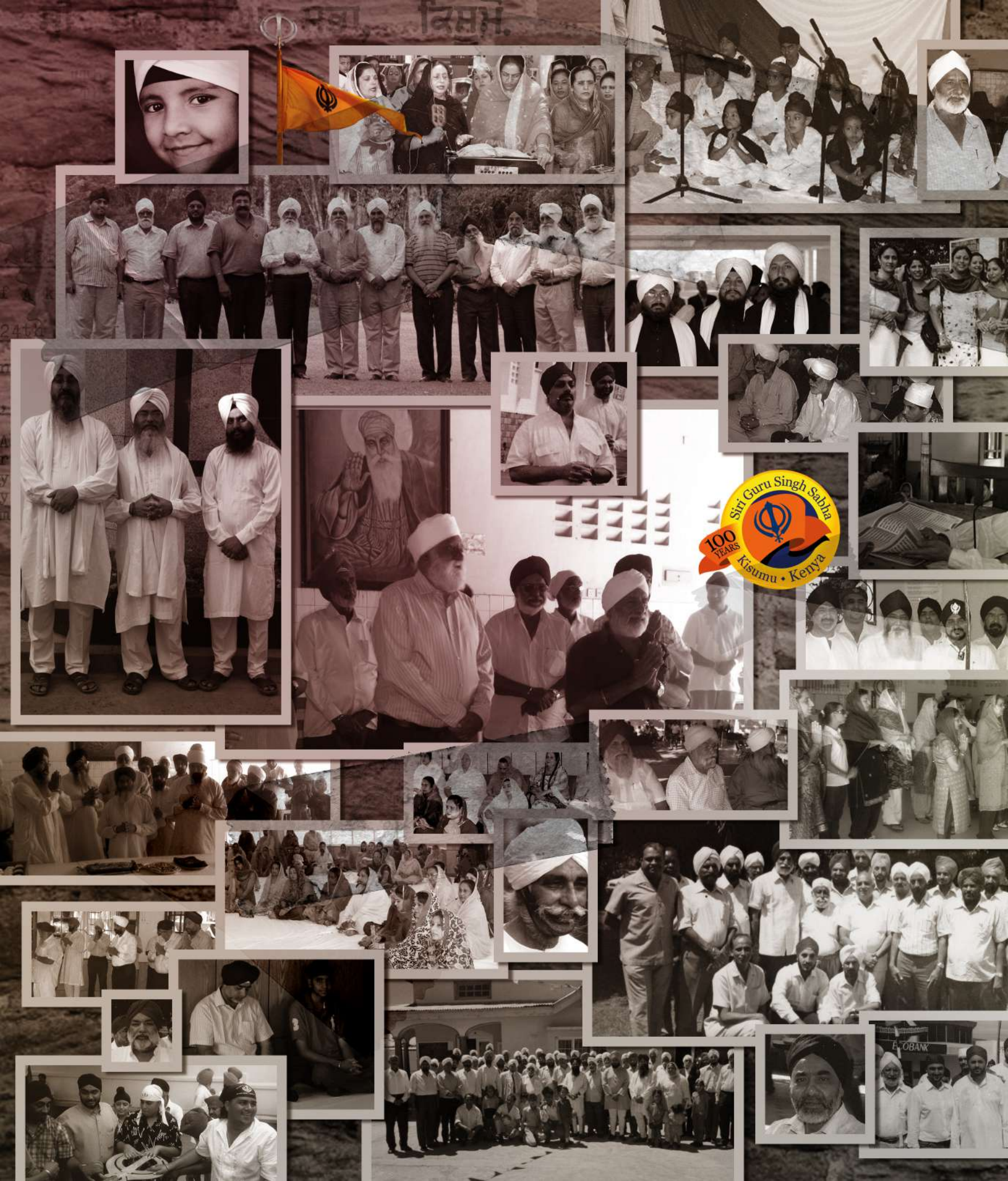
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100 YEARS
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